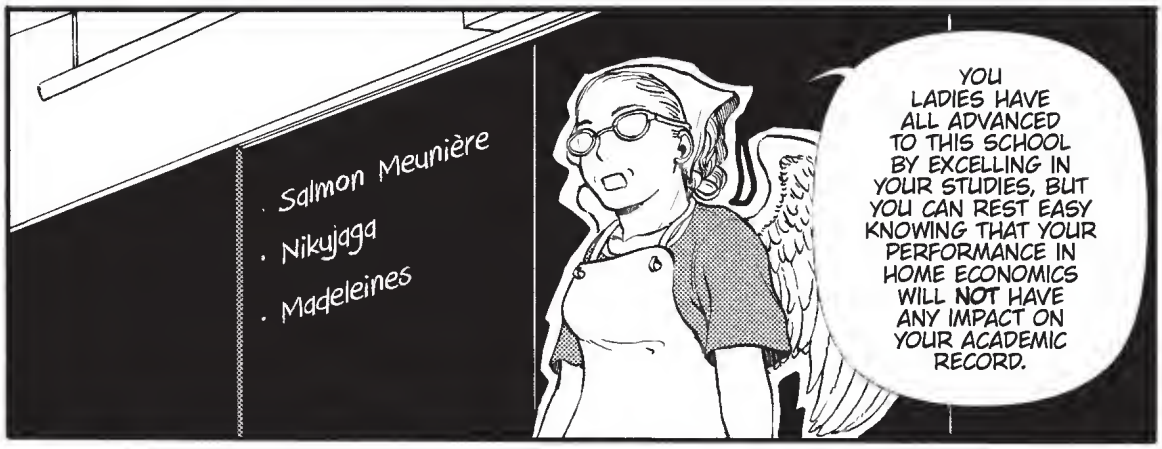
A CentaUr's Life

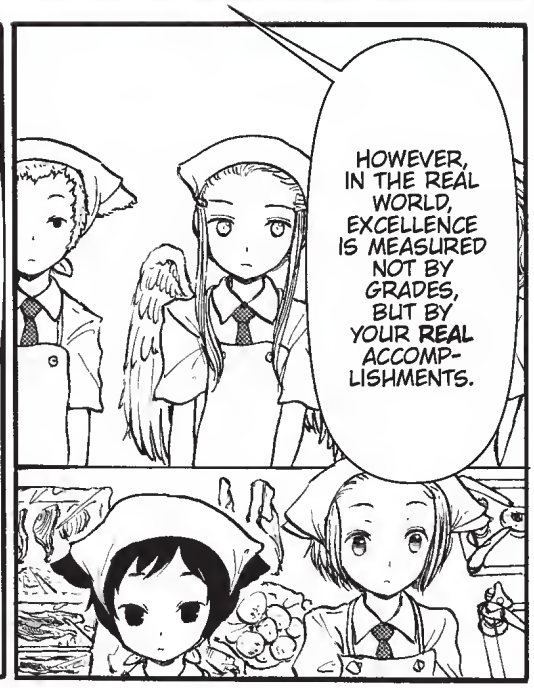
story & art

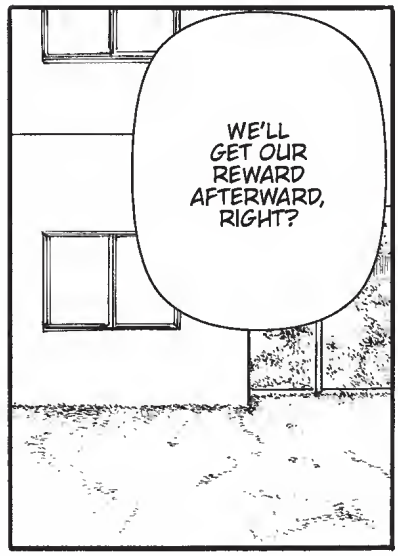
KEI MURAYAMA

7


. Salmon Meunière
. Nikujaga
. Madeleines
YOU LADIES HAVE ALL ADVANCED TO THIS SCHOOL BY EXCELLING IN YOUR STUDIES, BUT YOU CAN REST EASY KNOWING THAT YOUR PERFORMANCE IN HOME ECONOMICS WILL NOT HAVE ANY IMPACT ON YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD.

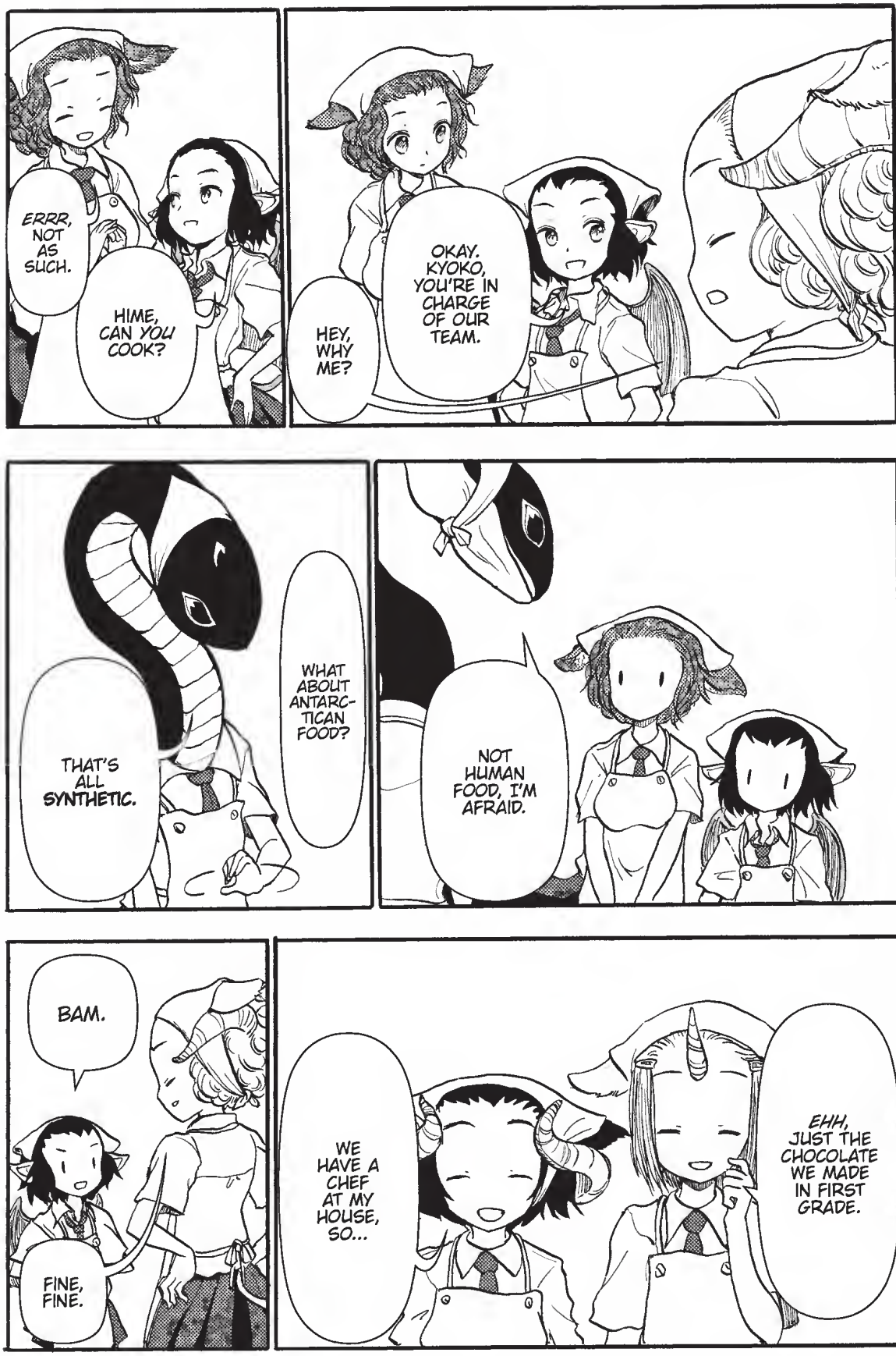
Jeez, way to psych us up.
Now, now.
COOKING IS THE BEST WAY TO EXAMINE ONE'S OWN LEVEL OF SKILL--TO AFFIRM ONE'S SENSE OF SELF.

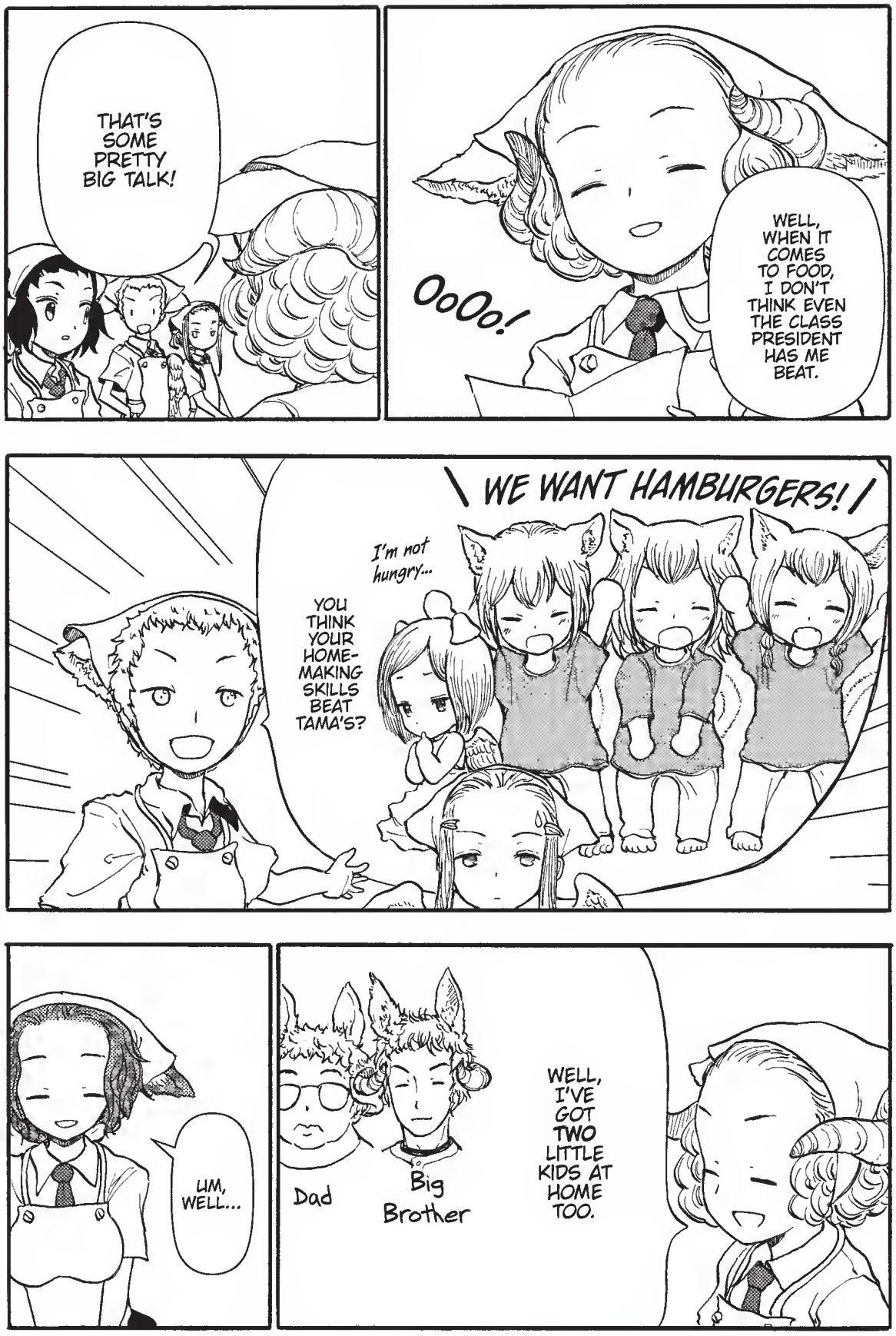

HOWEVER, IN THE REAL WORLD, EXCELLENCE IS MEASURED NOT BY GRADES, BUT BY YOUR REAL ACCOMP-LISHMENTS.

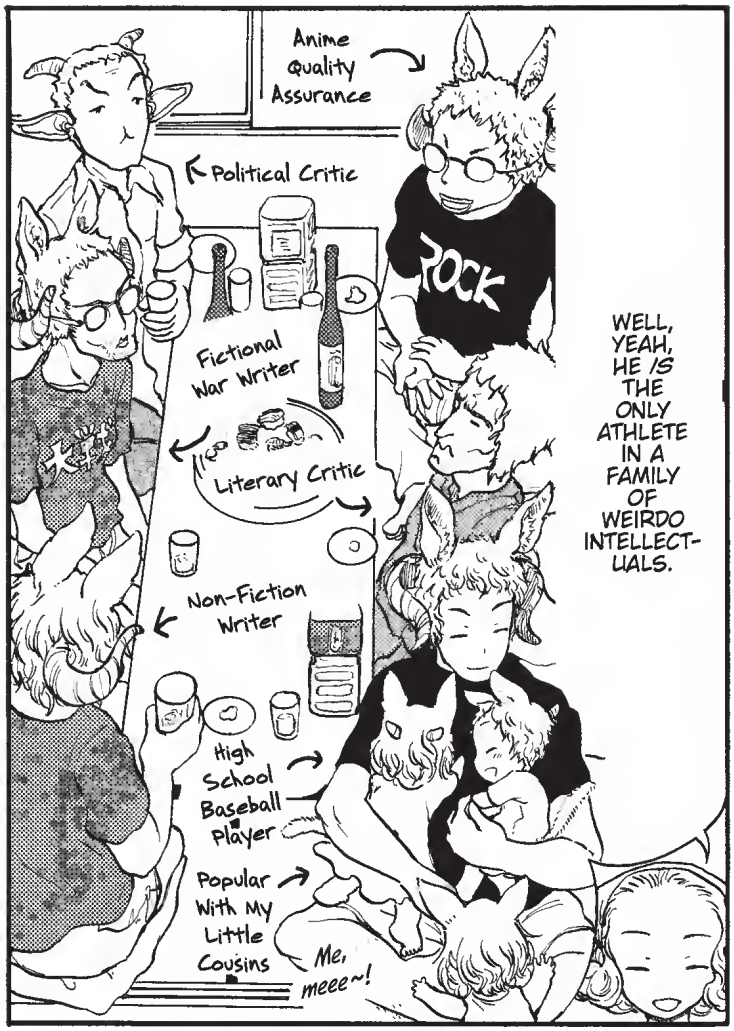

WE'LL GET OUR REWARD AFTERWARD, RIGHT?

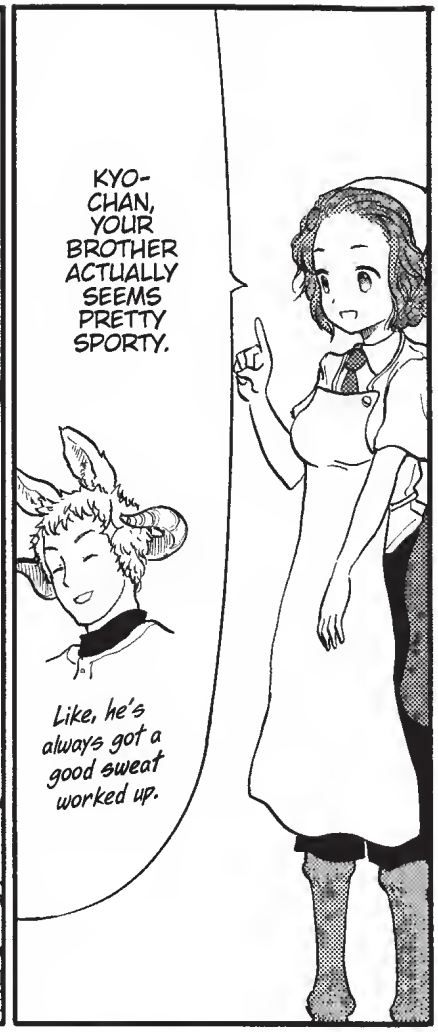
DANG IT.
We haven't even had lunch yet.
GRR... HOW COME THE GIRLS GET TO MAKE FOOD AND WE'RE STUCK RUNNING?
Fujimoto

CHAPTER 38


ERRR, NOT AS SUCH.
HIME, CAN YOU COOK?
HEY, WHY ME?
OKAY. KYOKO, YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF OUR TEAM.
THAT'S ALL SYNTHETIC.
WHAT ABOUT ANTARC-TICAN FOOD?
NOT HUMAN FOOD, I'M AFRAID.
BAM.
FINE, FINE.
WE HAVE A CHEF AT MY HOUSE, SO...
EHH, JUST THE CHOCOLATE WE MADE IN FIRST GRADE.

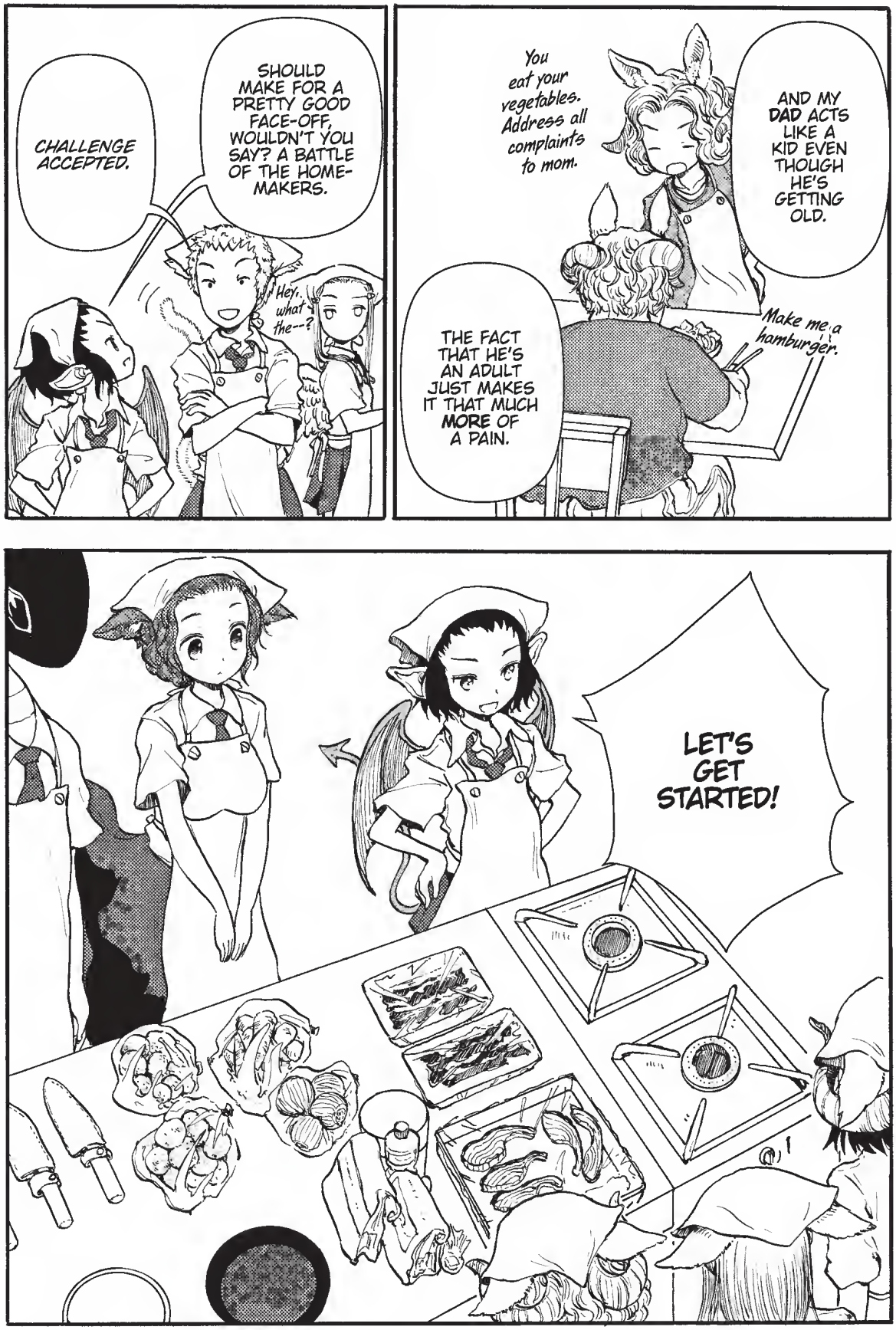

THAT'S SOME PRETTY BIG TALK!
OOOo!
WELL, WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD, I DON'T THINK EVEN THE CLASS PRESIDENT HAS ME BEAT.
\ WE WANT HAMBURGERS! /
I'm not hungry...
YOU THINK YOUR HOME-MAKING SKILLS BEAT TAMA'S?
UM, WELL...
Dad
Big Brother
WELL, I'VE GOT TWO LITTLE KIDS AT HOME TOO.

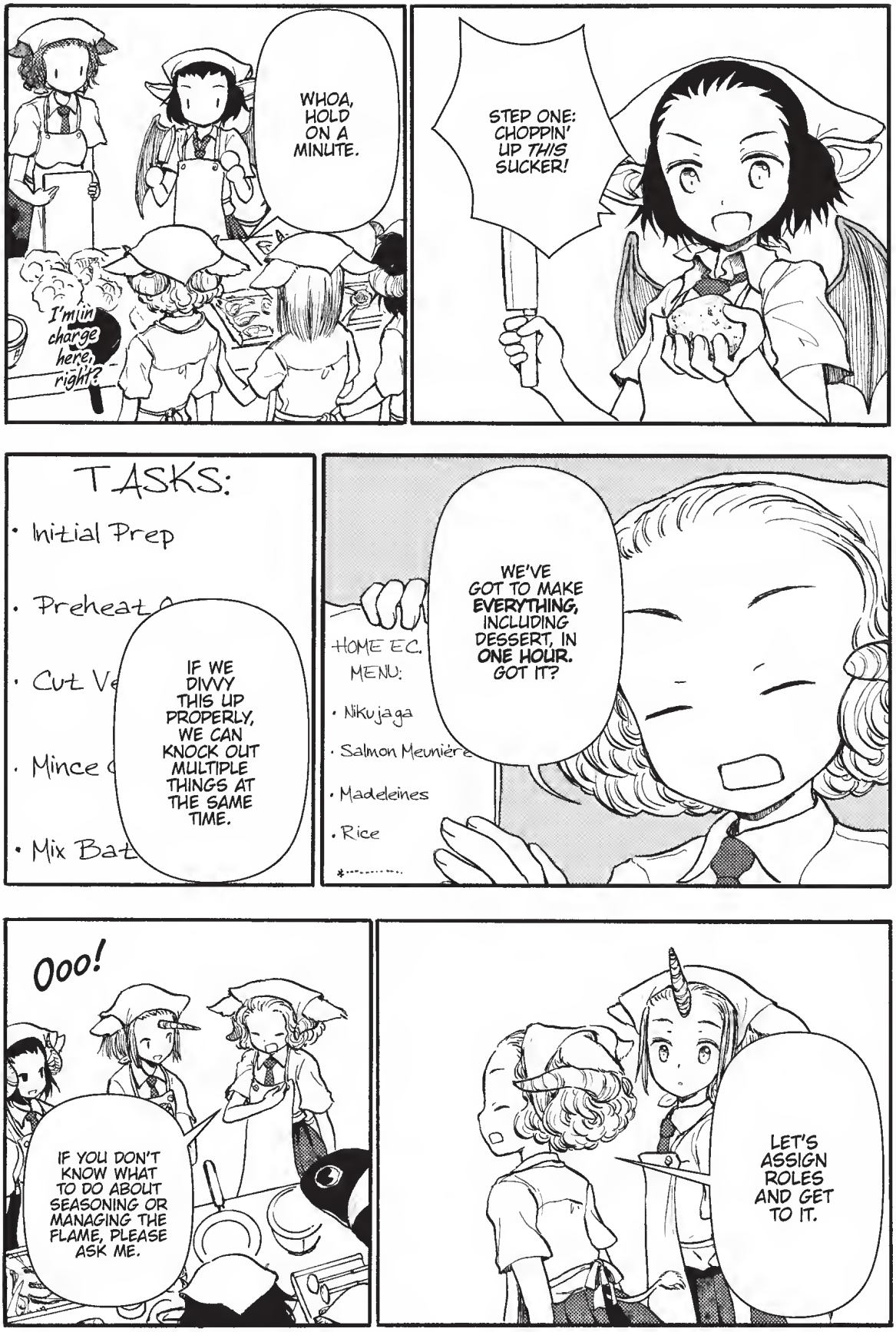

Anime Quality Assurance
Political Critic
ROCK
Fictional War Writer
Literary Critic
Non-Fiction Writer
High School Baseball Player
Popular With My Little Cousins
Me, meee~!
WELL, YEAH, HE IS THE ONLY ATHLETE IN A FAMILY OF WEIRDO INTELLECTUALS.

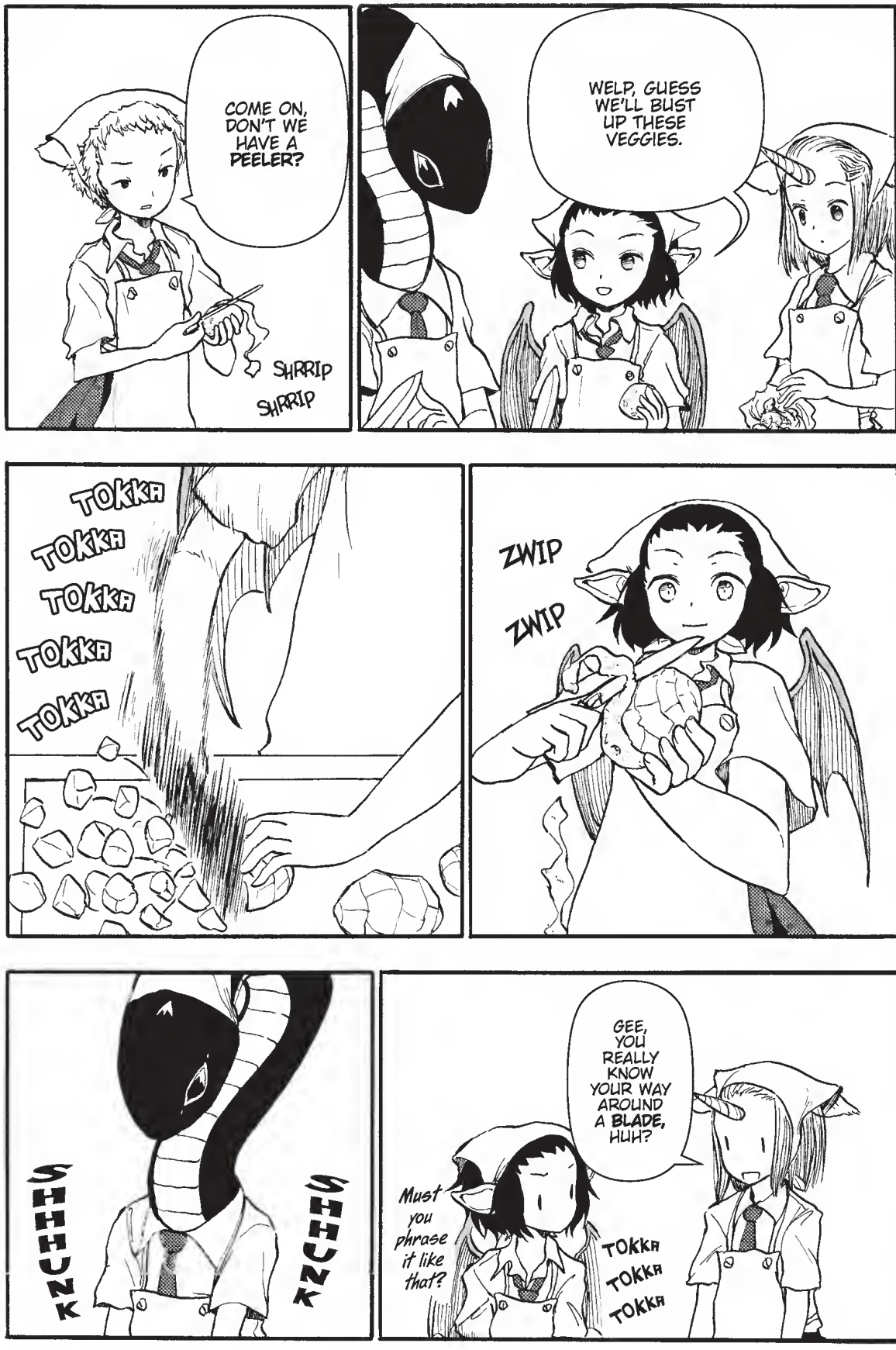

KYO-CHAN, YOUR BROTHER ACTUALLY SEEMS PRETTY SPORTY.
Like, he's always got a good sweat worked up.

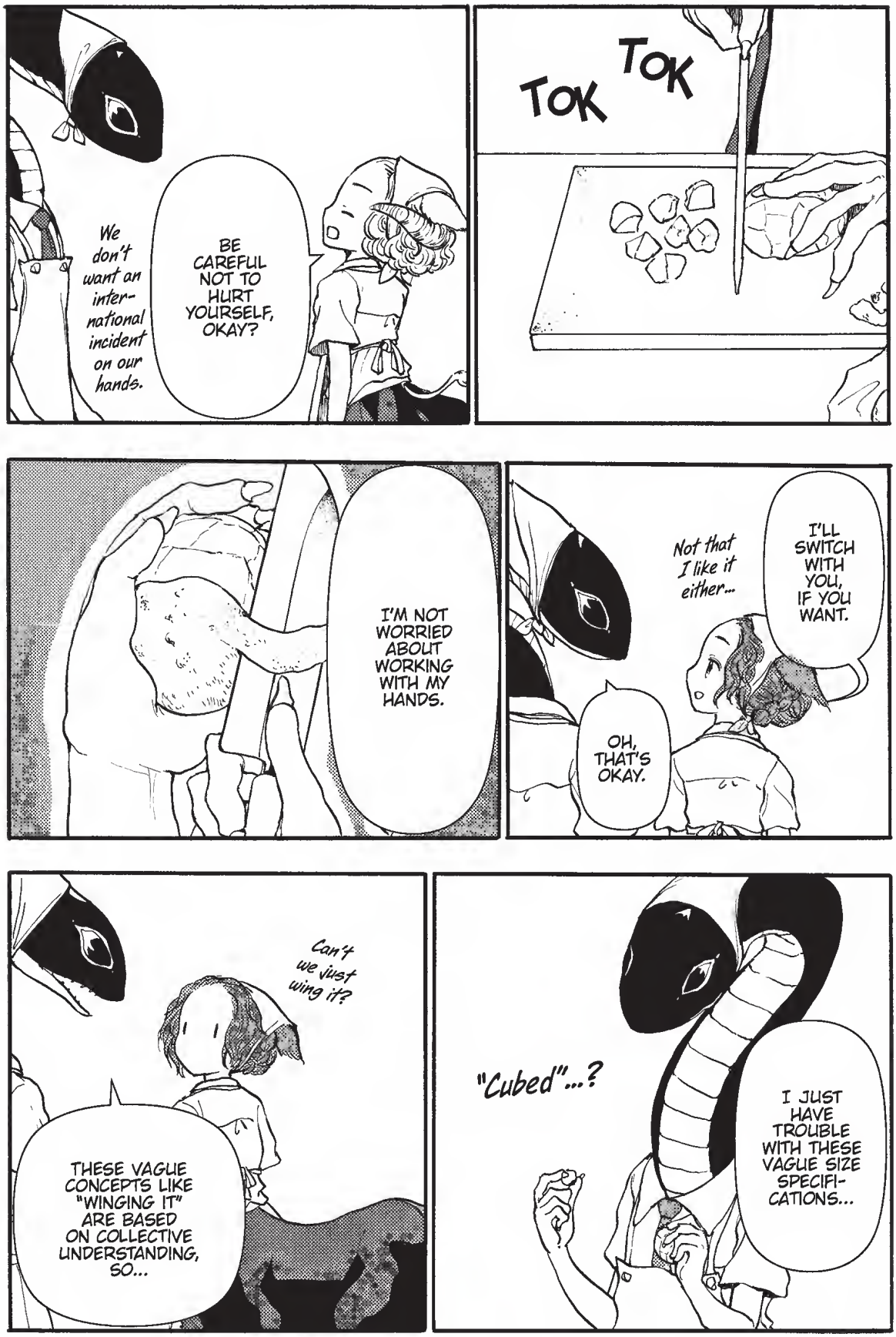
Tuna salad on rice.
What is this, horse feed?
Blah blah blah the fat content blah blah...
BUT THEN WHEN HE COOKS, IT'S ALWAYS JUST THROWN TOGETHER CRAPPILY.

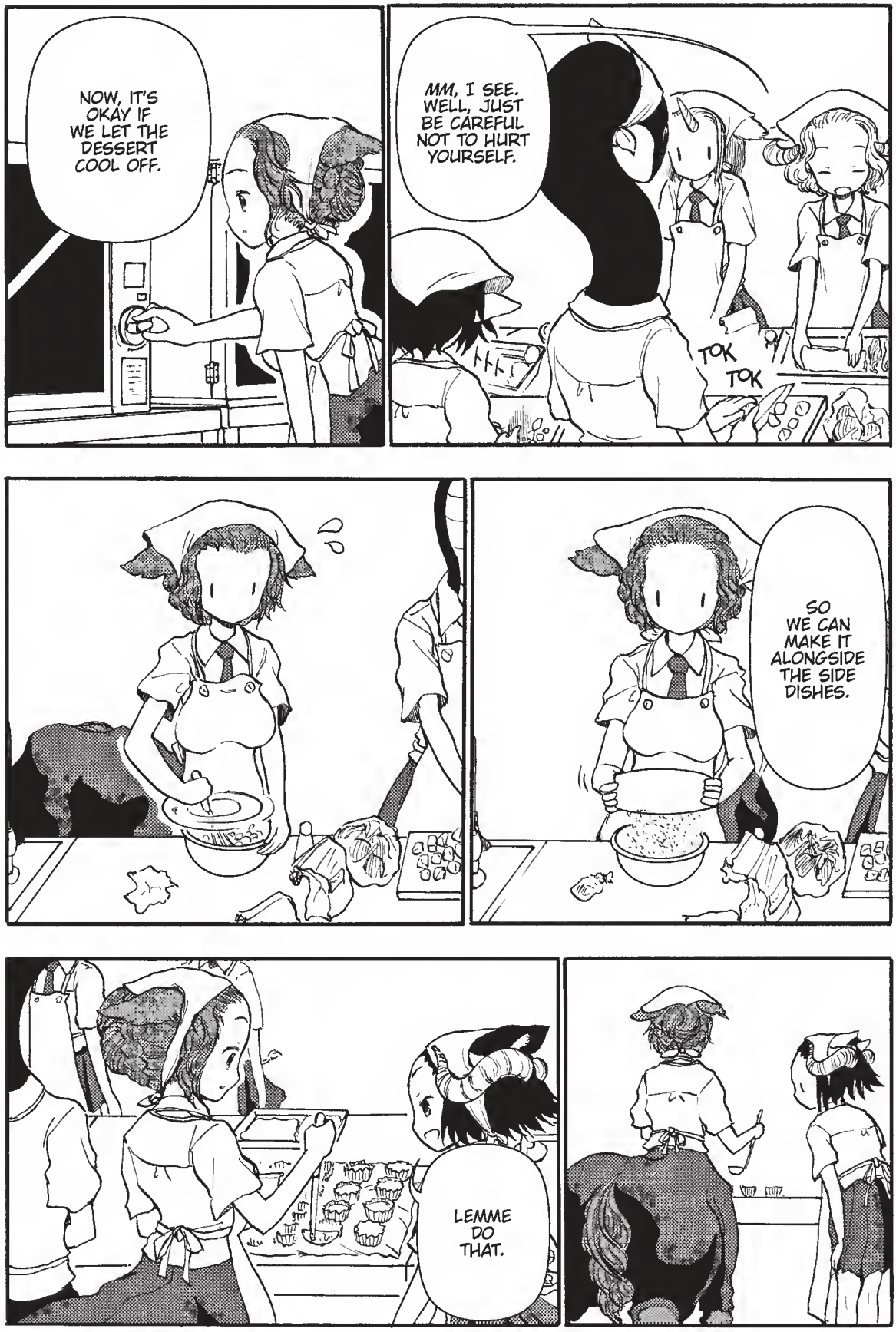
BUT, MAN...
Do this! Do that!
I MEAN, I DON'T MIND THAT HE'S A SERIOUS GUY, BUT HE'S SO PICKY ABOUT HIS FOOD.

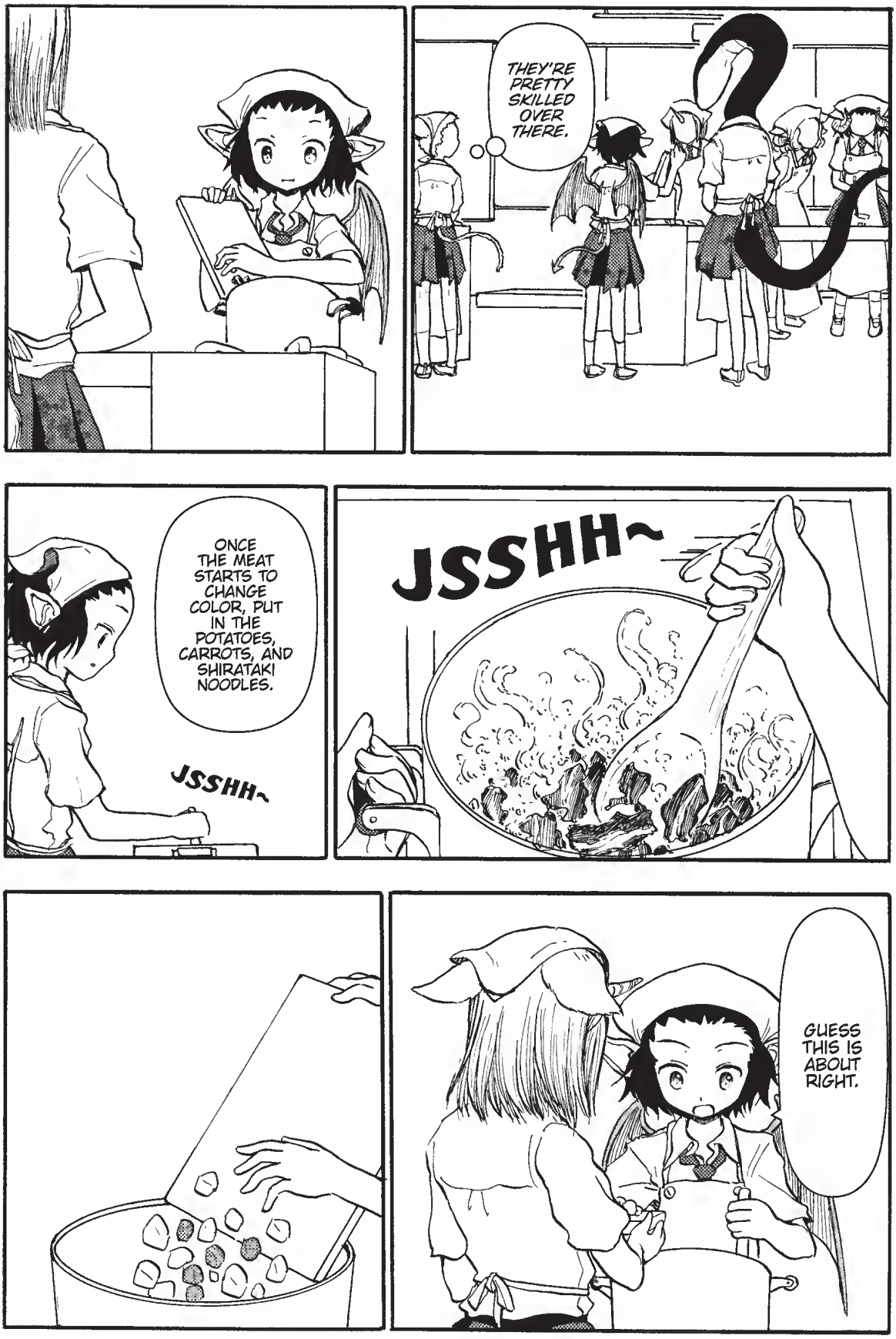

SHOULD MAKE FOR A PRETTY GOOD FACE-OFF, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? A BATTLE OF THE HOME-MAKERS.
CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.
Hey, what the--?
AND MY DAD ACTS LIKE A KID EVEN THOUGH HE'S GETTING OLD.
You eat your vegetables. Address all complaints to mom.
Make me a hamburger.
THE FACT THAT HE'S AN ADULT JUST MAKES IT THAT MUCH MORE OF A PAIN.
LET'S GET STARTED!

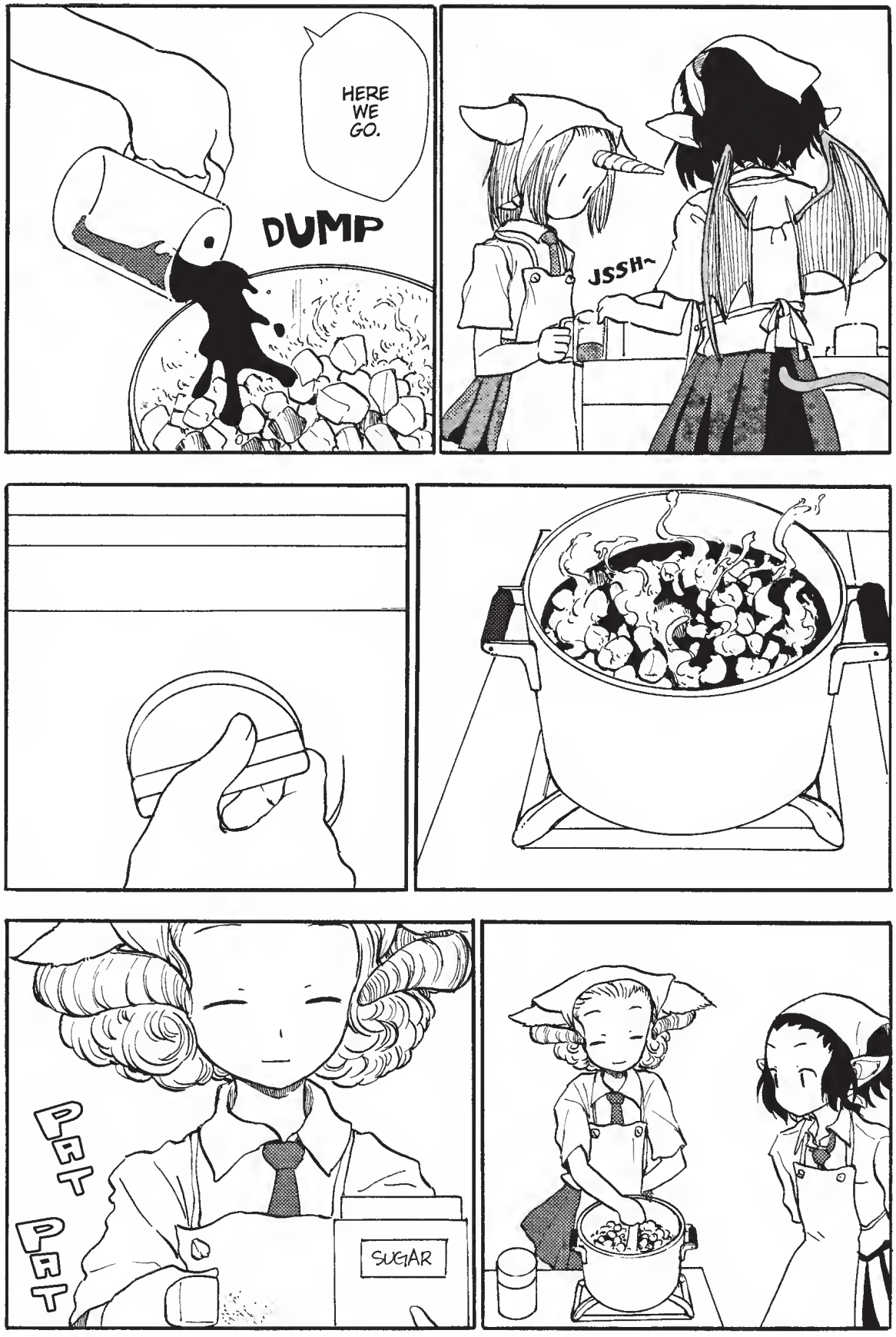

WHOA, HOLD ON A MINUTE.
I'm in charge here, right?
STEP ONE: CHOPPIN' UP THIS SUCKER!
TASKS:
• Initial Prep
• Preheat
• Cut Ve
• Mince
• Mix Bat
IF WE DIVVY THIS UP PROPERLY, WE CAN KNOCK OUT MULTIPLE THINGS AT THE SAME TIME.
HOME EC. MENU:
• Nikujaga
• Salmon Meunière
• Madeleines
• Rice
WE'VE GOT TO MAKE EVERYTHING, INCLUDING DESSERT, IN ONE HOUR. GOT IT?
Ooo!
IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT SEASONING OR MANAGING THE FLAME, PLEASE ASK ME.
LET'S ASSIGN ROLES AND GET TO IT.

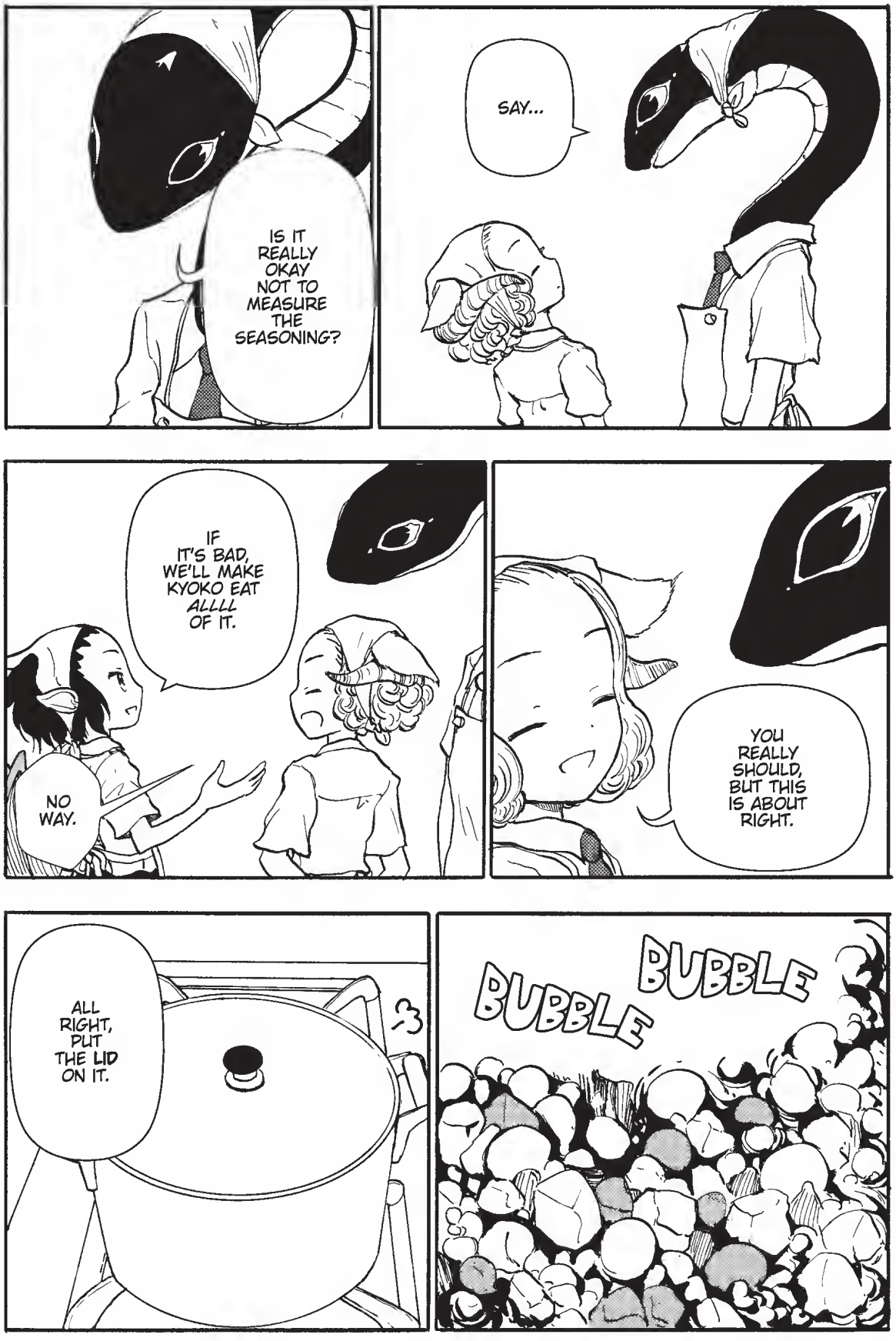

COME ON, DON'T WE HAVE A PEELER?
SHRRIP SHRRIP
WELP, GUESS WE'LL BUST UP THESE VEGGIES.
TOKKA TOKKA TOKKA TOKKA TOKKA
ZWIP ZWIP
SHHHUNK SHHUNK
GEE, YOU REALLY KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND A BLADE, HUH?
Must you phrase it like that?
TOKKA TOKKA TOKKA

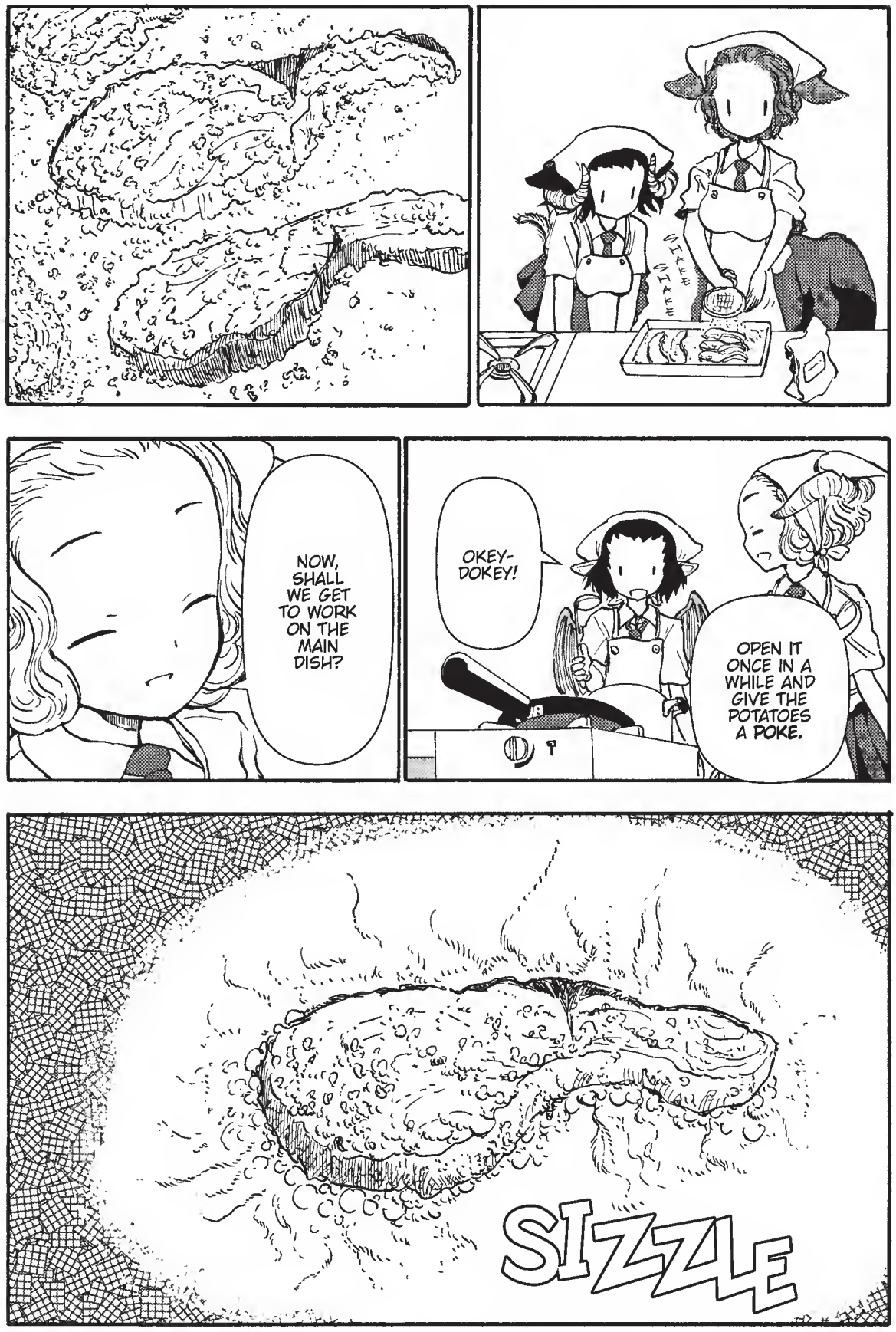

We don't want an international incident on our hands.
BE CAREFUL NOT TO HURT YOURSELF, OKAY?
TOK TOK
I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT WORKING WITH MY HANDS.
Not that I like it either...
I'LL SWITCH WITH YOU, IF YOU WANT.
OH, THAT'S OKAY.
Can't we just wing it?
THESE VAGUE CONCEPTS LIKE "WINGING IT" ARE BASED ON COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING, SO...
"Cubed"...?
I JUST HAVE TROUBLE WITH THESE VAGUE SIZE SPECIFI-CATIONS...

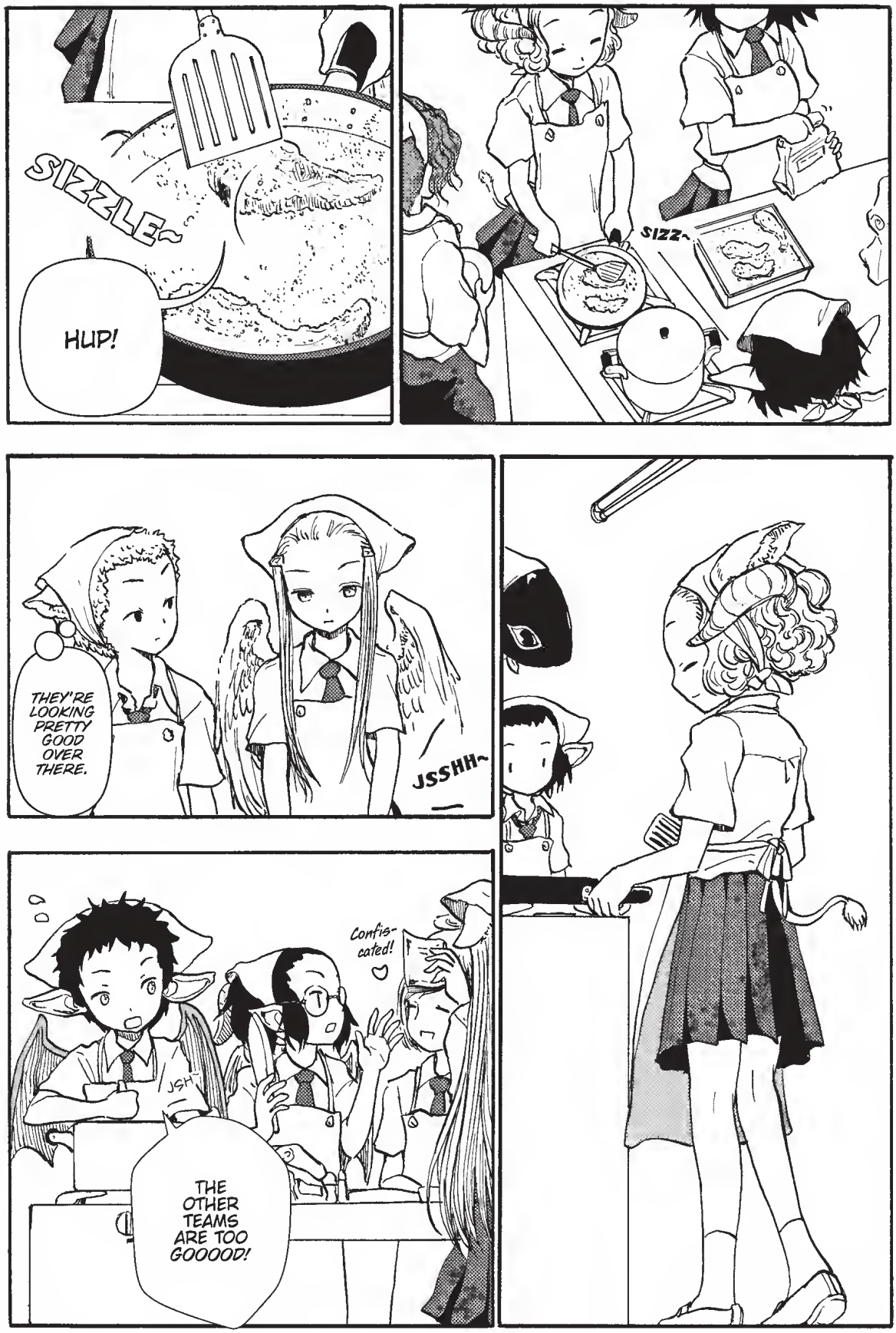

NOW, IT'S OKAY IF WE LET THE DESSERT COOL OFF.
MM, I SEE. WELL, JUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO HURT YOURSELF.
TOK TOK
SO WE CAN MAKE IT ALONGSIDE THE SIDE DISHES.
LEMME DO THAT.

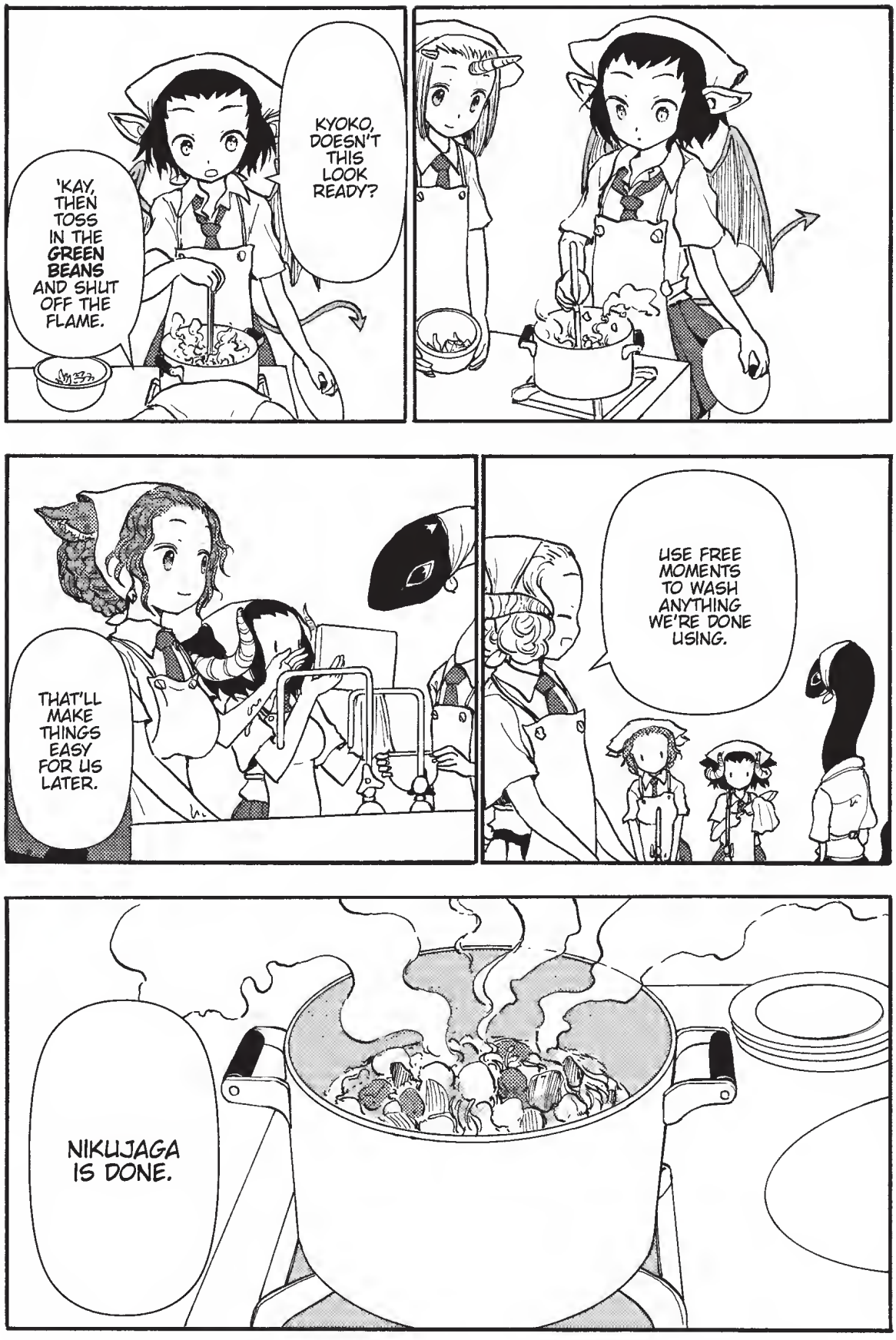

THEY'RE PRETTY SKILLED OVER THERE.
ONCE THE MEAT STARTS TO CHANGE COLOR, PUT IN THE POTATOES, CARROTS, AND SHIRATAKI NOODLES.
JSSHH~
JSSHH~
GUESS THIS IS ABOUT RIGHT.

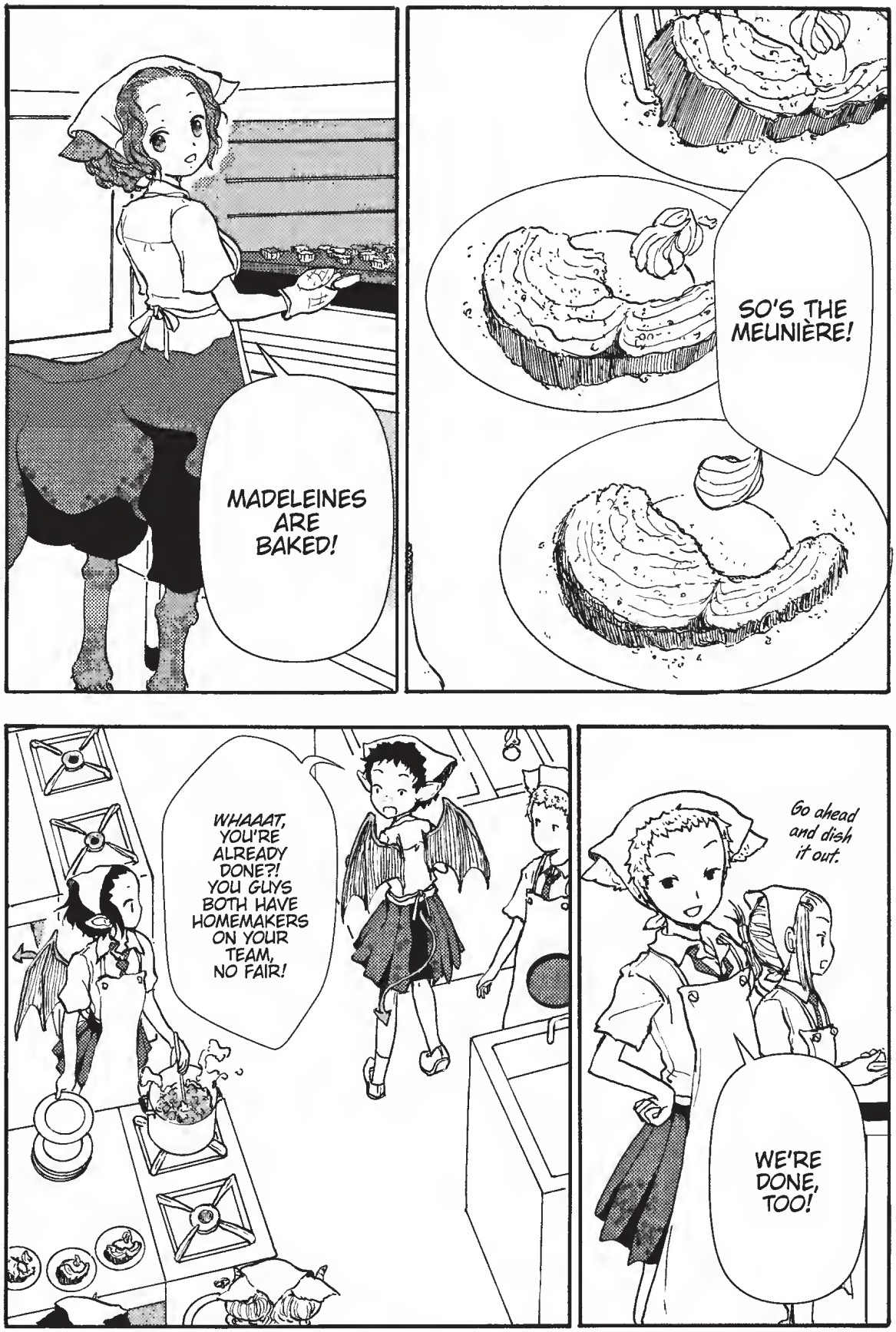

HERE WE GO.
DUMP
JSSH~
PAT
PAT
SUGAR

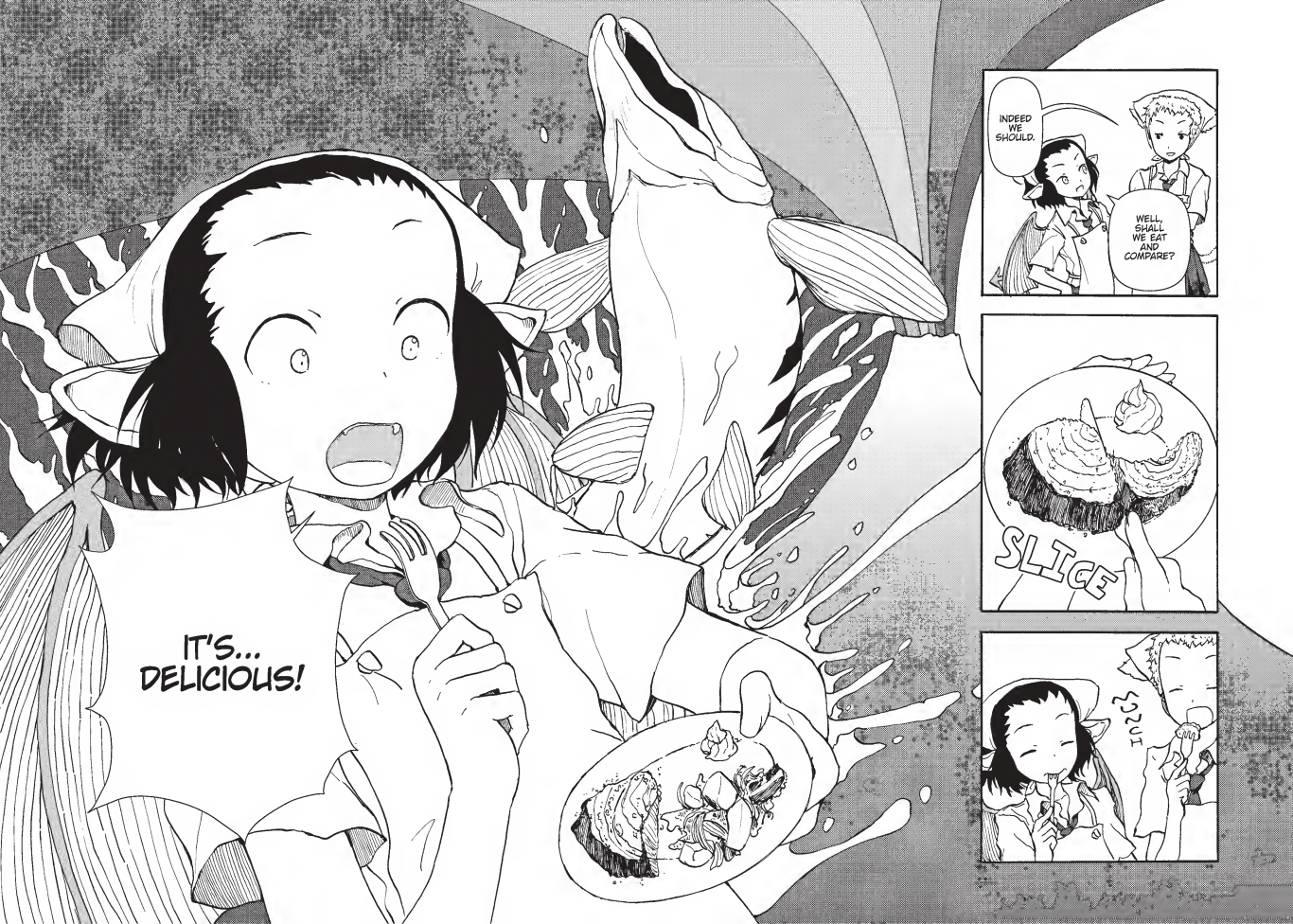

IS IT REALLY OKAY NOT TO MEASURE THE SEASONING?
SAY...
IF IT'S BAD, WE'LL MAKE KYOKO EAT ALLLL OF IT.
NO WAY.
YOU REALLY SHOULD, BUT THIS IS ABOUT RIGHT.
ALL RIGHT, PUT THE LID ON IT.
BUBBLE
BUBBLE
BUBBLE

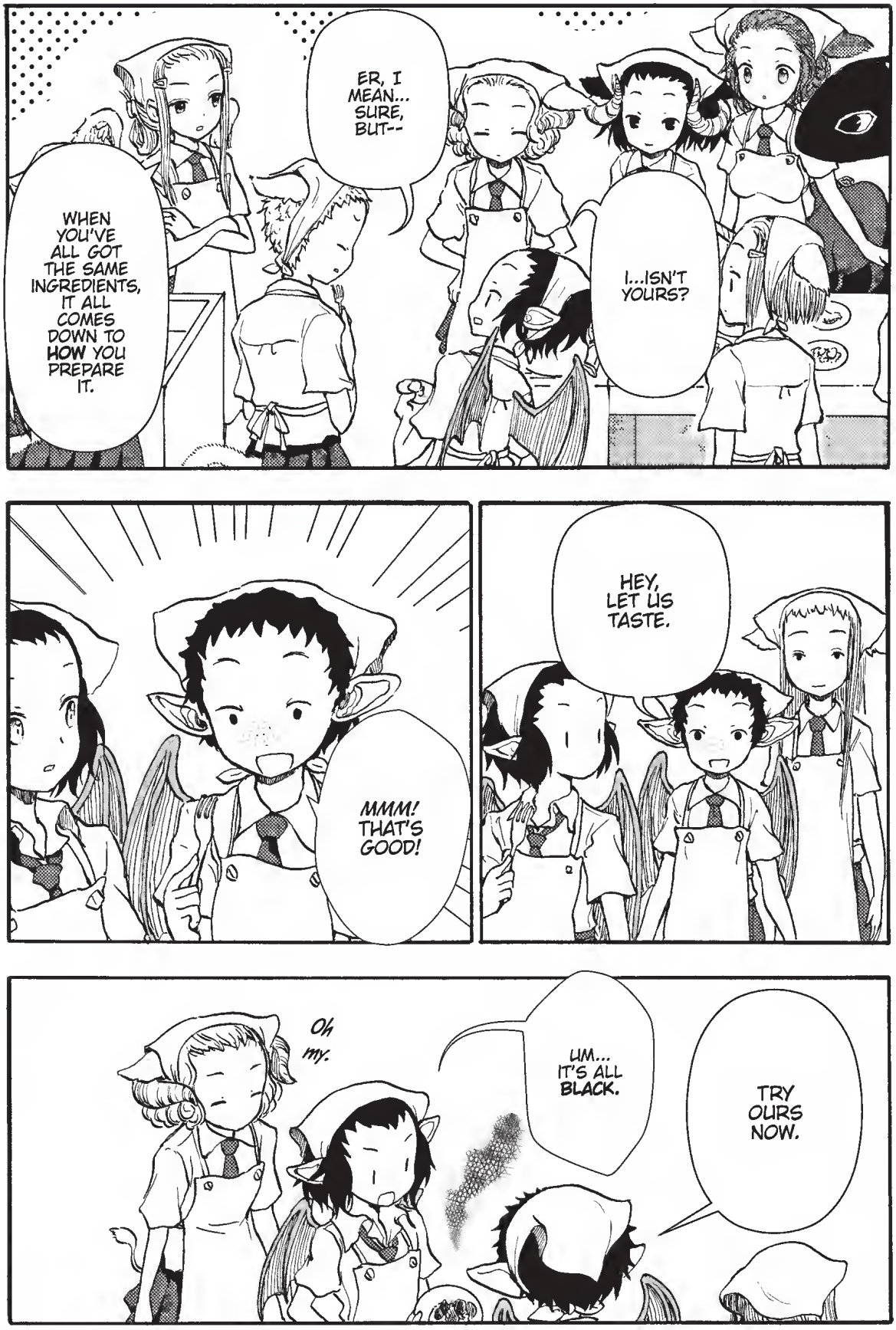

SIZZLE
NOW, SHALL WE GET TO WORK ON THE MAIN DISH?
OKEY-DOKEY!
OPEN IT ONCE IN A WHILE AND GIVE THE POTATOES A POKE.

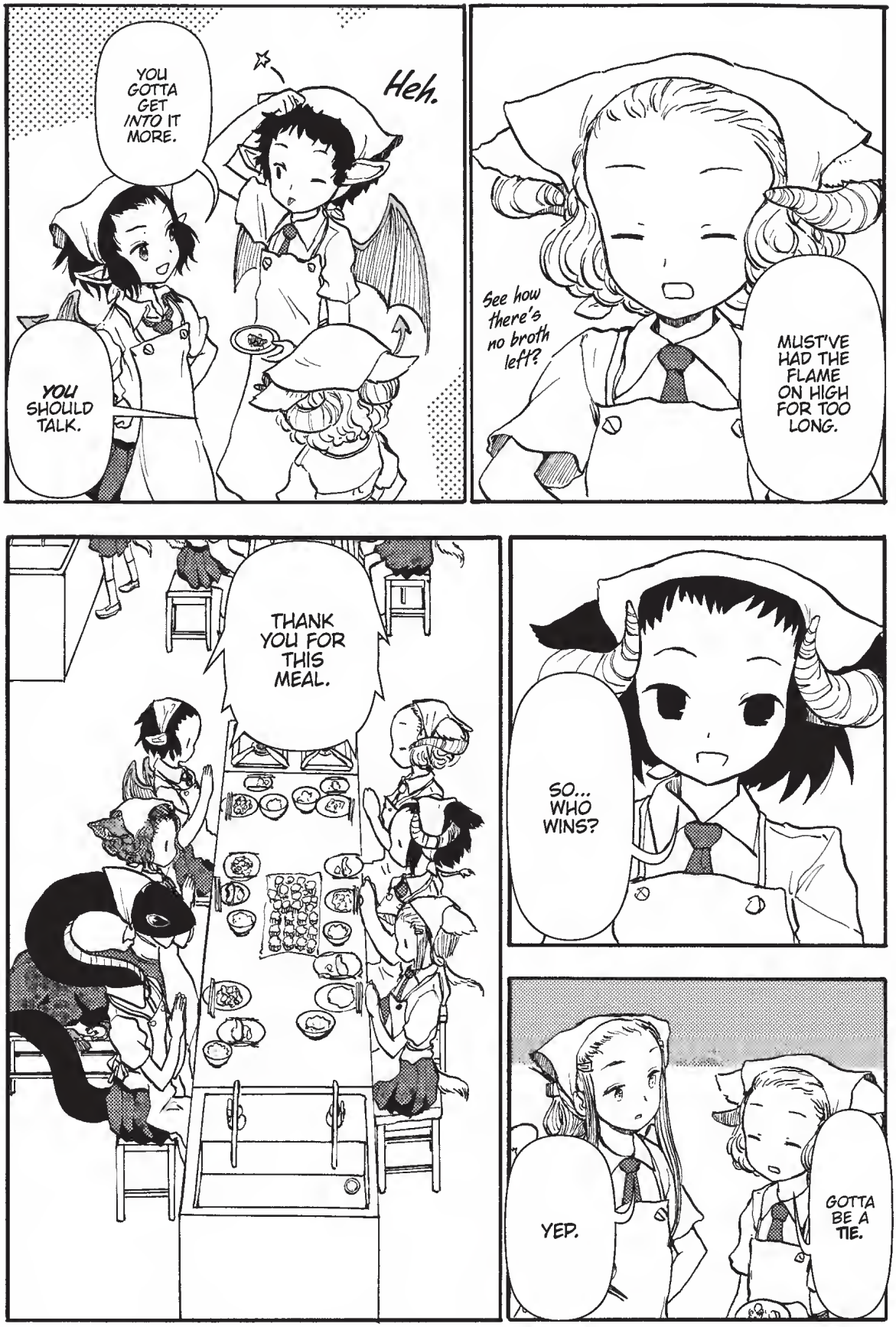

SIZZLE~
HUP!
SIZZ~
THEY'RE LOOKING PRETTY GOOD OVER THERE.
JSSHH~
Confis-cated!
JSH
THE OTHER TEAMS ARE TOO GOOOOD!

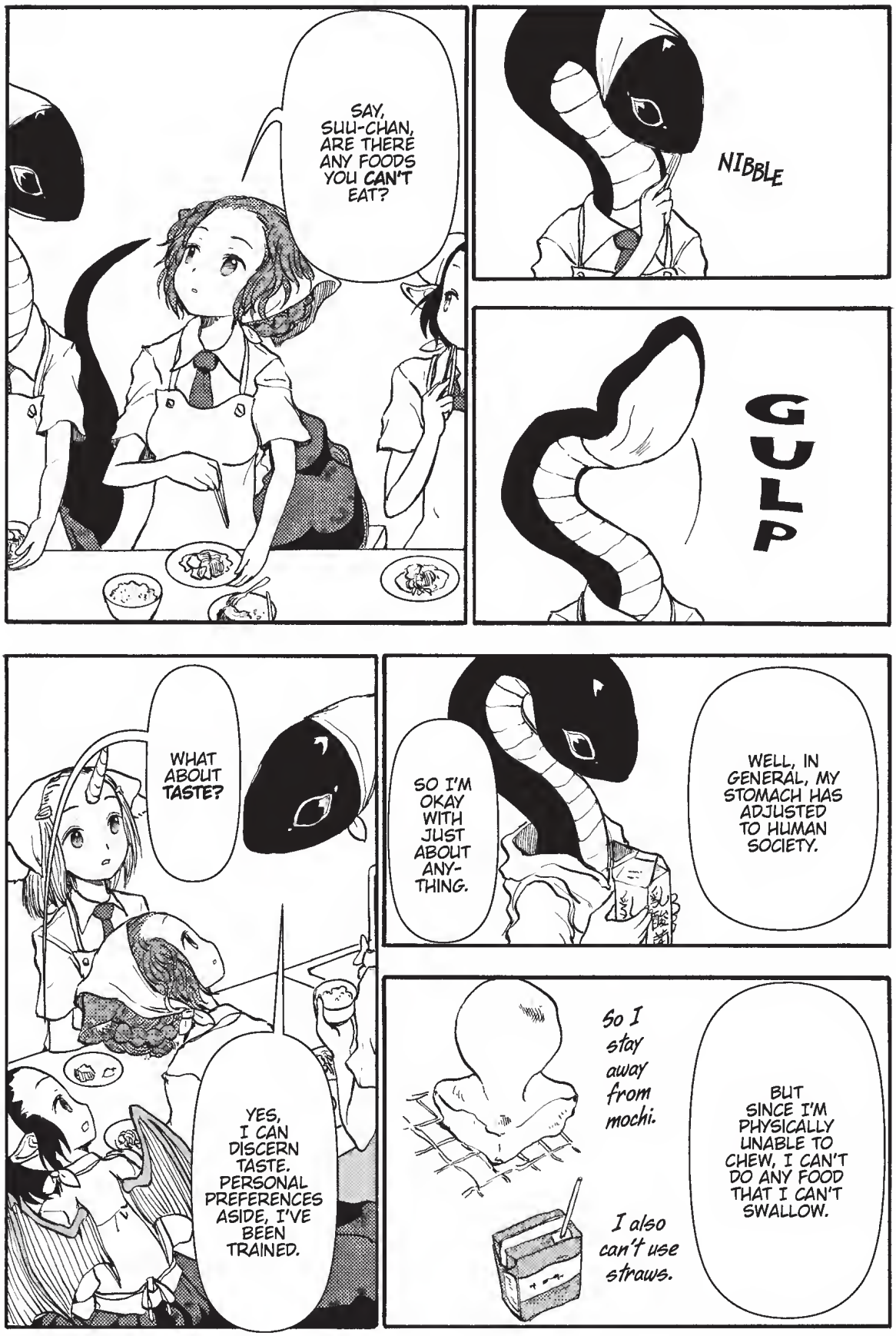

KYOKO, DOESN'T THIS LOOK READY?
'KAY, THEN TOSS IN THE GREEN BEANS AND SHUT OFF THE FLAME.
THAT'LL MAKE THINGS EASY FOR US LATER.
USE FREE MOMENTS TO WASH ANYTHING WE'RE DONE USING.
NIKUJAGA IS DONE.

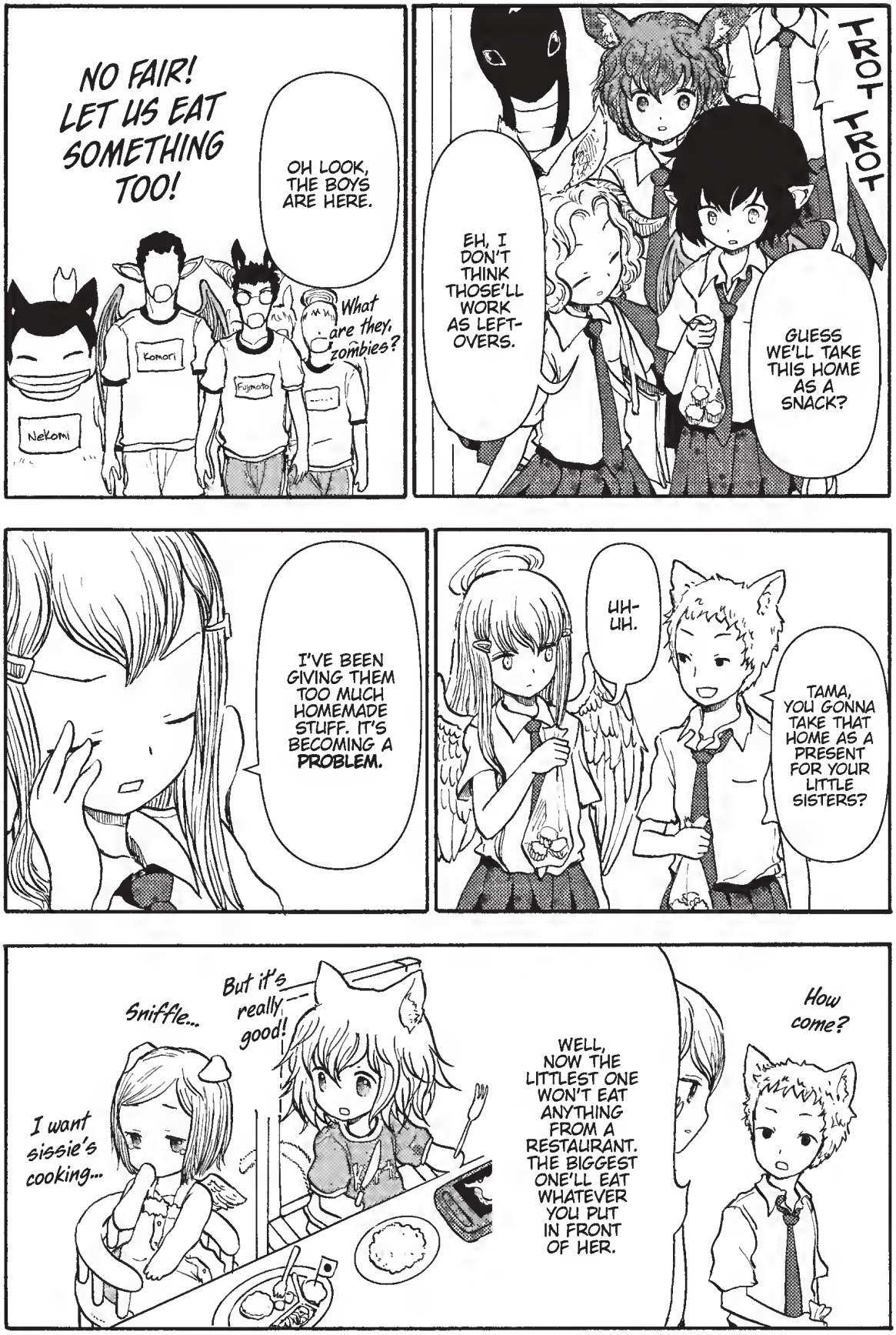

MADELEINES ARE BAKED!
SO'S THE MEUNIÈRE!
WHAAAAT, YOU'RE ALREADY DONE?! YOU GUYS BOTH HAVE HOMEMAKERS ON YOUR TEAM, NO FAIR!
Go ahead and dish it out.
WE'RE DONE, TOO!


INDEED WE SHOULD.
WELL, SHALL WE EAT AND COMPARE?
SLICE
IT'S... DELICIOUS!

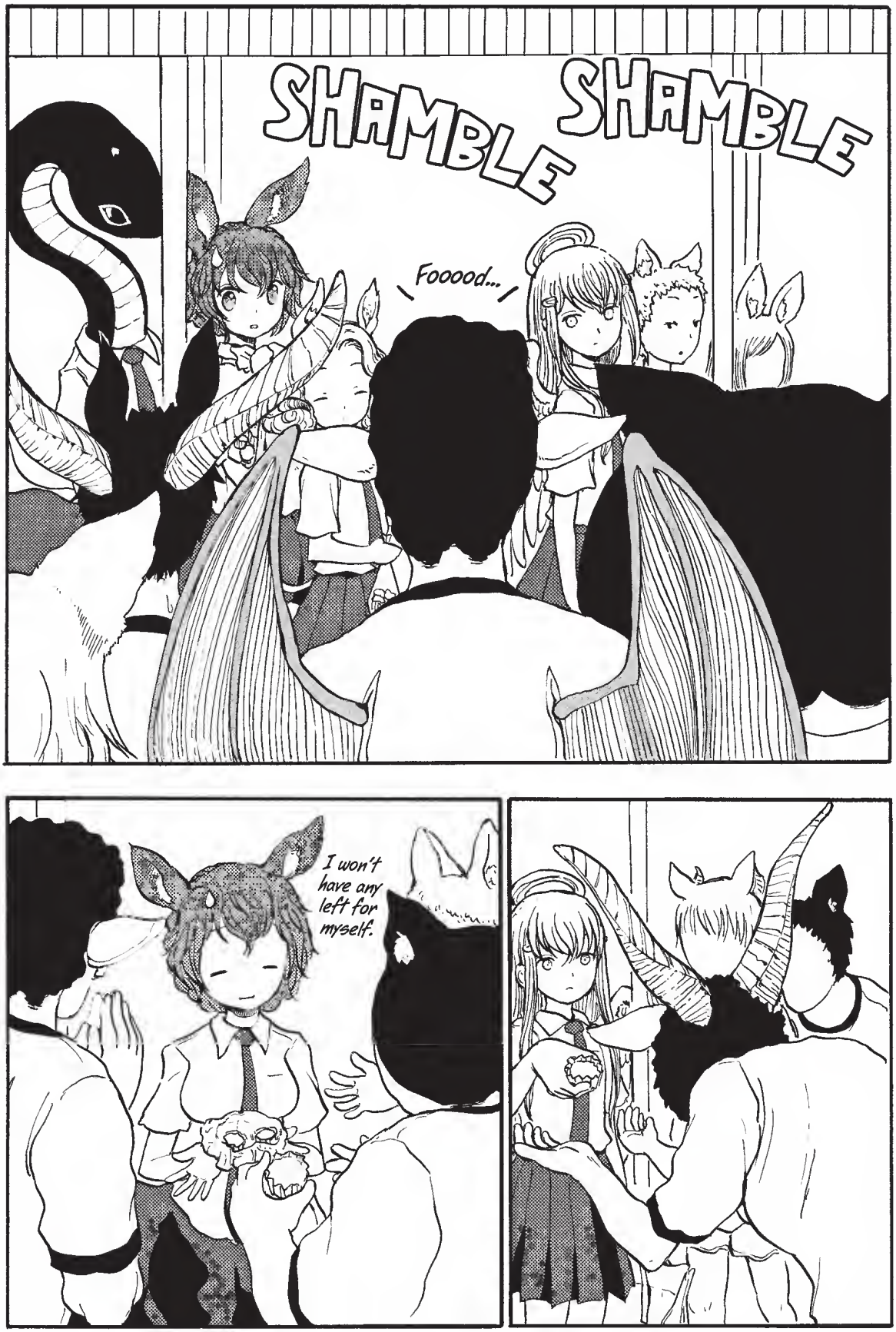

WHEN YOU'VE ALL GOT THE SAME INGREDIENTS, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO HOW YOU PREPARE IT.
ER, I MEAN... SURE, BUT--
I...ISN'T YOURS?
MMM! THAT'S GOOD!
HEY, LET US TASTE.
Oh my.
UM... IT'S ALL BLACK.
TRY OURS NOW.


YOU GOTTA GET INTO IT MORE.
Heh.
YOU SHOULD TALK.
See how there's no broth left?
MUST'VE HAD THE FLAME ON HIGH FOR TOO LONG.
THANK YOU FOR THIS MEAL.
SO... WHO WINS?
YEP.
GOTTA BE A TIE.


SAY, SUU-CHAN, ARE THERE ANY FOODS YOU CAN'T EAT?
NIBBLE
GULP
WHAT ABOUT TASTE?
YES, I CAN DISCERN TASTE. PERSONAL PREFERENCES ASIDE, I'VE BEEN TRAINED.
SO I'M OKAY WITH JUST ABOUT ANY-THING.
WELL, IN GENERAL, MY STOMACH HAS ADJUSTED TO HUMAN SOCIETY.
So I stay away from mochi.
I also can't use straws.
BUT SINCE I'M PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO CHEW, I CAN'T DO ANY FOOD THAT I CAN'T SWALLOW.

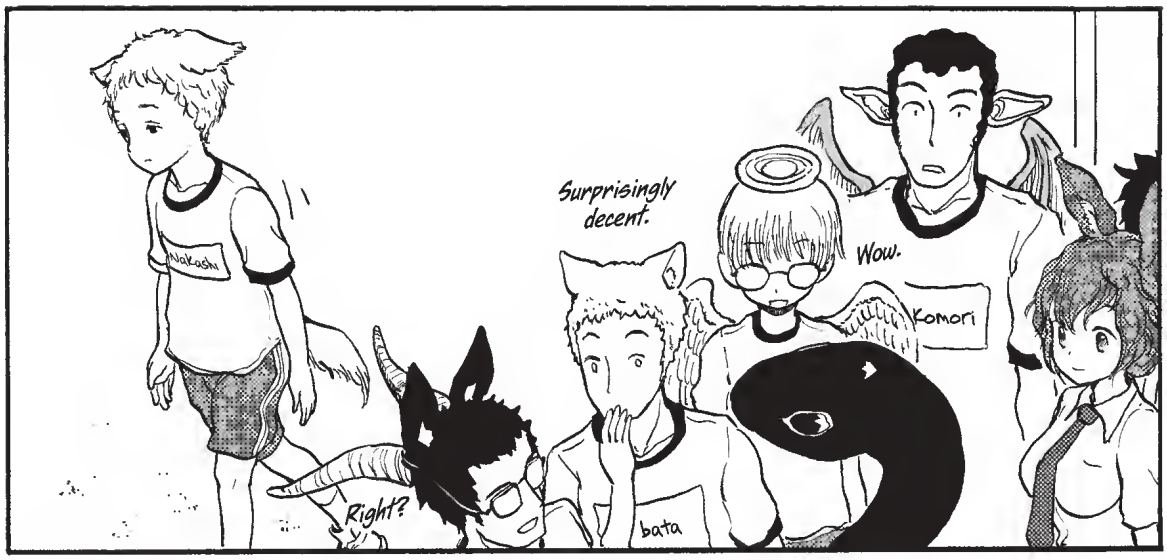

NO FAIR! LET US EAT SOMETHING TOO!
OH LOOK, THE BOYS ARE HERE.
What are they, zombies?
Nekomi
Komori
Fujimoto
TROT TROT
EH, I DON'T THINK THOSE'LL WORK AS LEFT-OVERS.
GUESS WE'LL TAKE THIS HOME AS A SNACK?
I'VE BEEN GIVING THEM TOO MUCH HOMEMADE STUFF. IT'S BECOMING A PROBLEM.
UH-UH.
TAMA, YOU GONNA TAKE THAT HOME AS A PRESENT FOR YOUR LITTLE SISTERS?
Sniffle...
But it's really good!
I want sissie's cooking...
WELL, NOW THE LITTLEST ONE WON'T EAT ANYTHING FROM A RESTAURANT. THE BIGGEST ONE'LL EAT WHATEVER YOU PUT IN FRONT OF HER.
How come?

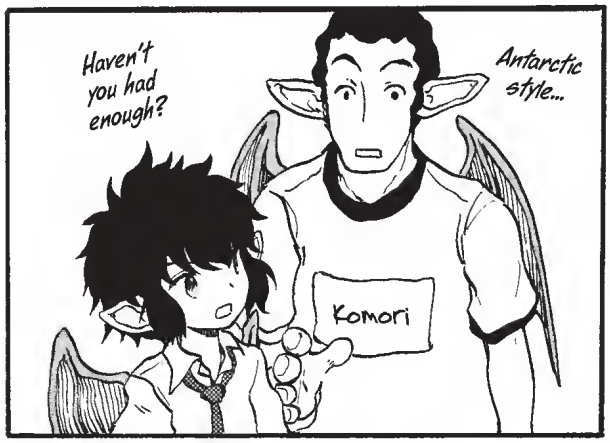
I don't make that!
OF COURSE NOT!
JEEZ, WHAT'D YOU DO, FEED HER YOUR BREAST MILK, TOO?
Aah~!
WEIRD THING IS, SHE'LL EAT IT IF YOU DO THE "SAY AAH" THING, SO IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TASTE.
SO I'M TRYING TO GET HER USED TO EATING SOME READY-MADE STUFF.
Ahh, I get it.
GUESS IT'S KINDA LIKE HOW IF YOU'RE A FISHERMAN'S KID, YOU CAN'T STAND TO EAT FROZEN FISH?
JEEZ, DON'T FRET SO MUCH OVER A LITTLE SNACK.
BUT MOST OF IT'S EITHER LOADED WITH SUGAR OR ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS, OR FULL OF PRESERVATIVES, OR WHATEVER.

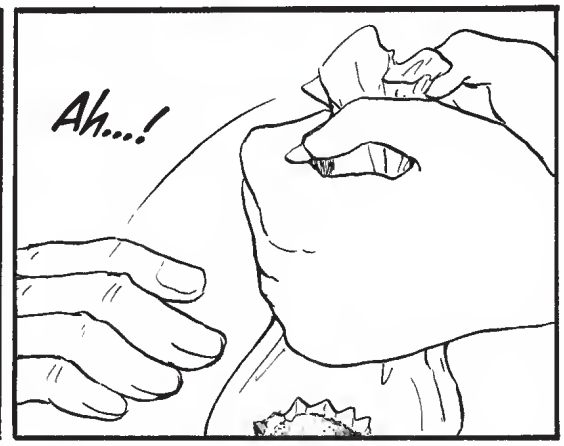

SHAMBLE
SHAMBLE
Fooood...
I won't have any left for myself.

Don't eat it if you're gonna complain!
We'll rock-paper-scissors for it!
Why don't you just split it?
All gone~!
THIS IS BURNT...

CAN I HAVE ONE?
Fujimoto
Fujimoto
Antarctica style, huh?
No, actually.
WHOA, GIMME ONE THEN.
WOW, THAT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY GOOD.


Nakashi
Surprisingly decent.
Wow.
Komori
Right?
bata


Haven't you had enough?
Antarctic style...
Komori


Ah...!

THANKS.

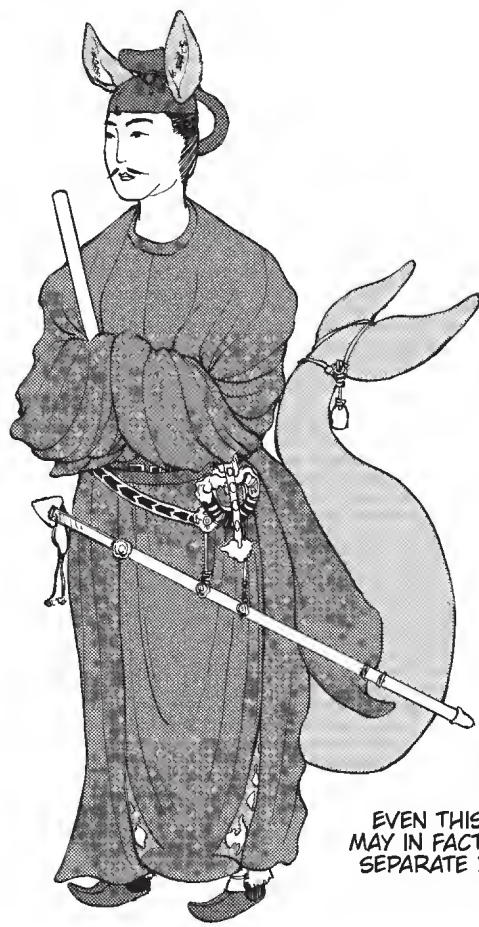
WOULD YOU LIKE ONE?
Nakashi

A CentaUr's Life

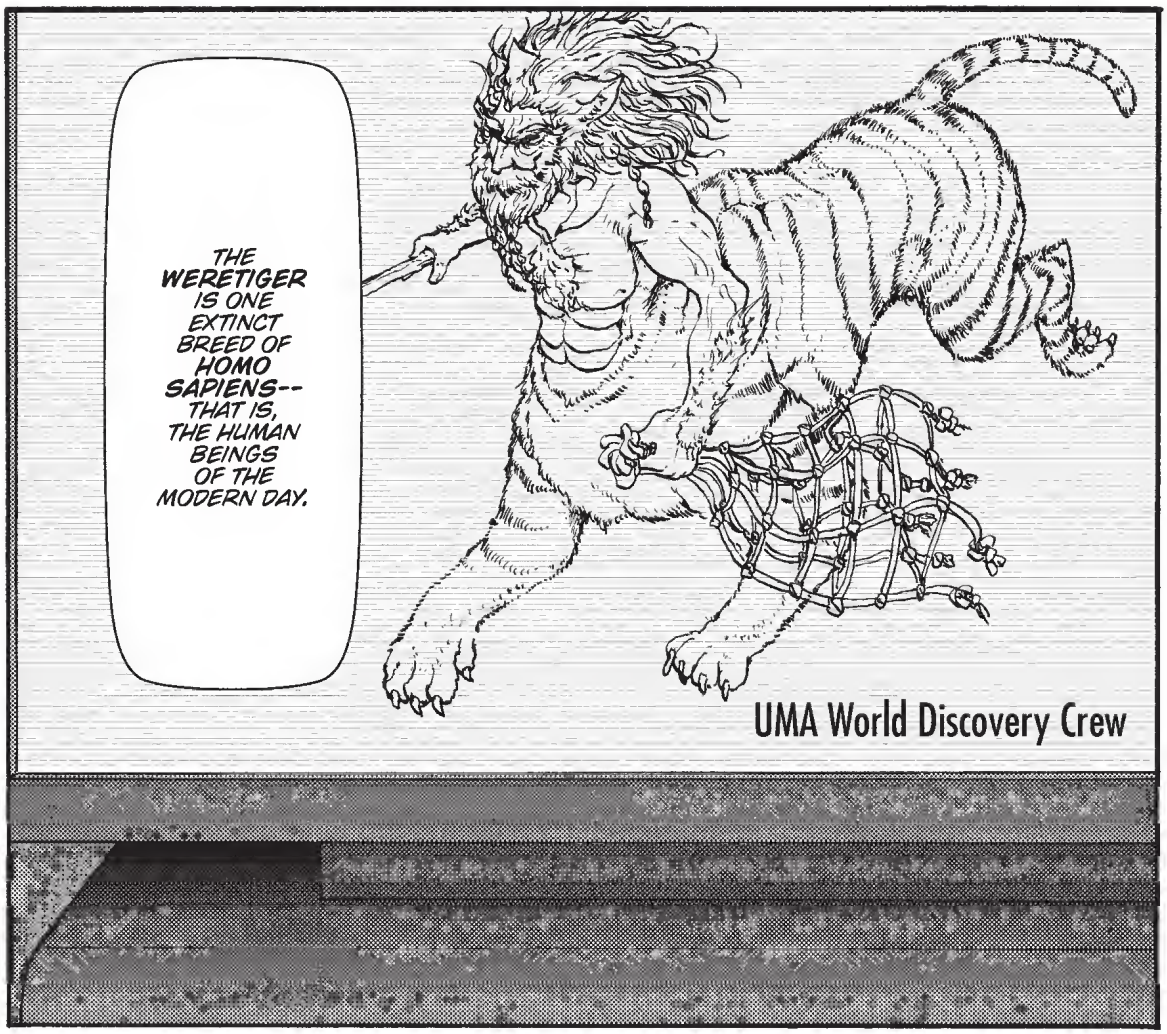
HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)
SHOUTOKU TAISHI (574-622)

GRANDSON OF THE EMPEROR KINMEI, AS WELL AS OF SOGA NO INAME, WHOSE FAMILY WAS IN POWERFUL STANDING AT THE TIME. THOUGH HIS REAL NAME WAS UMAYADO, HE WAS KNOWN BY SEVERAL OTHERS, SUCH AS TOYOSATOMIMI AND KAMITSU-NO-MIYA. SHOUTOKU SERVED AS A POLITICIAN UNDER THE FIRST EMPRESS IN JAPANESE HISTORY, EMPRESS SUIKO. APART FROM HIS MANY POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS, WHICH INCLUDED THE PRESERVATION OF BUDDHISM, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE HORYOJI, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "TWELVE LEVEL CAP AND RANK SYSTEM" AND THE SEVENTEEN-ARTICLE CONSTITUTION, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF AN AMBASSADOR TO CHINA, HE ALSO LEAVES BEHIND A NUMBER OF FAMOUS EPISODES, SUCH AS HIS LEGENDARY ABILITY TO LISTEN TO AND COMPREHEND TEN MEN'S CLAIMS AT ONCE.

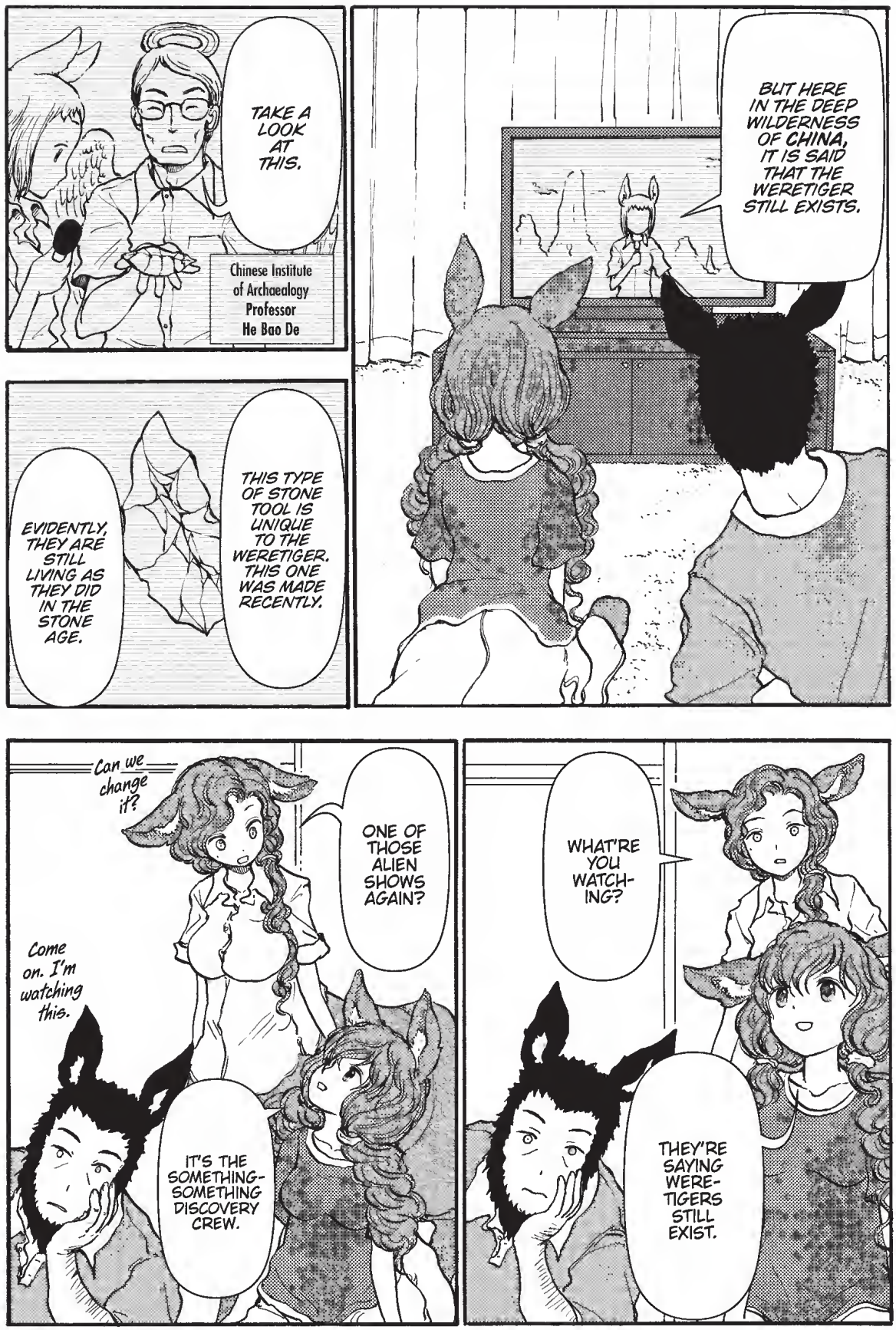
HOWEVER, WITH TAISHI ALREADY COMING TO BE REGARDED AS A SAINTLY FIGURE BY THE TIME THE *NIHON SHOKI* WAS WRITTEN JUST A CENTURY AFTER HIS DEATH, A NUMBER OF THESE EPISODES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIALLY EMBELLISHED, EXAGGERATED, OR ELSE HAVING HAPPENED TO A SEPARATE FIGURE. SOME THEORIES WOULD DISPUTE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SHOUTOKU TAISHI, BUT SINCE LITERARY MATERIALS FROM THIS ANCIENT TIME ARE SO LIMITED, IT IS DIFFICULT TO COMPARE TEXTS FOR CORROBORATING FACTUAL CONSISTENCIES OR REACH ANY DECISIVE CONCLUSION ON THE MATTER.



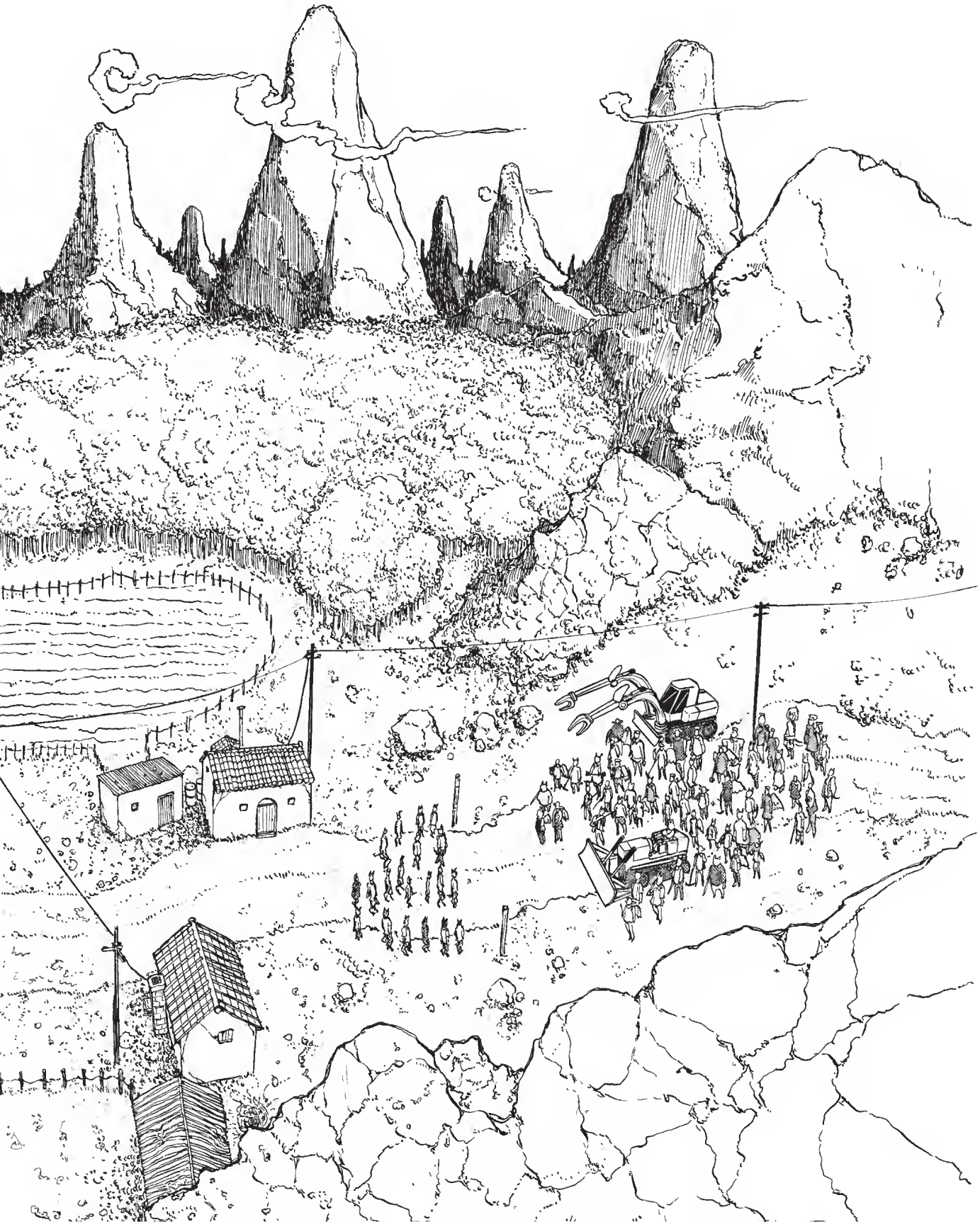
EVEN THIS IMAGE MAY IN FACT BE OF A SEPARATE PERSON.


THE WERETIGER IS ONE EXTINCT BREED OF HOMO SAPIENS-- THAT IS, THE HUMAN BEINGS OF THE MODERN DAY.
UMA World Discovery Crew

...THEY ARE SAID TO HAVE DIED OFF AFTER OVER-HUNTING THEIR PREY.
THOUGH THESE CREATURES WERE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND POSSESSED SUPERIOR HUNTING SKILLS...


TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
Chinese Institute of Archaeology Professor He Bao De
BUT HERE IN THE DEEP WILDERNESS OF CHINA, IT IS SAID THAT THE WERETIGER STILL EXISTS.
THIS TYPE OF STONE TOOL IS UNIQUE TO THE WERETIGER. THIS ONE WAS MADE RECENTLY.
EVIDENTLY, THEY ARE STILL LIVING AS THEY DID IN THE STONE AGE.
WHAT'RE YOU WATCH-ING?
THEY'RE SAYING WERE-TIGERS STILL EXIST.
ONE OF THOSE ALIEN SHOWS AGAIN?
Can we change it?
Come on. I'm watching this.
IT'S THE SOMETHING-SOMETHING DISCOVERY CREW.

CHAPTER 39



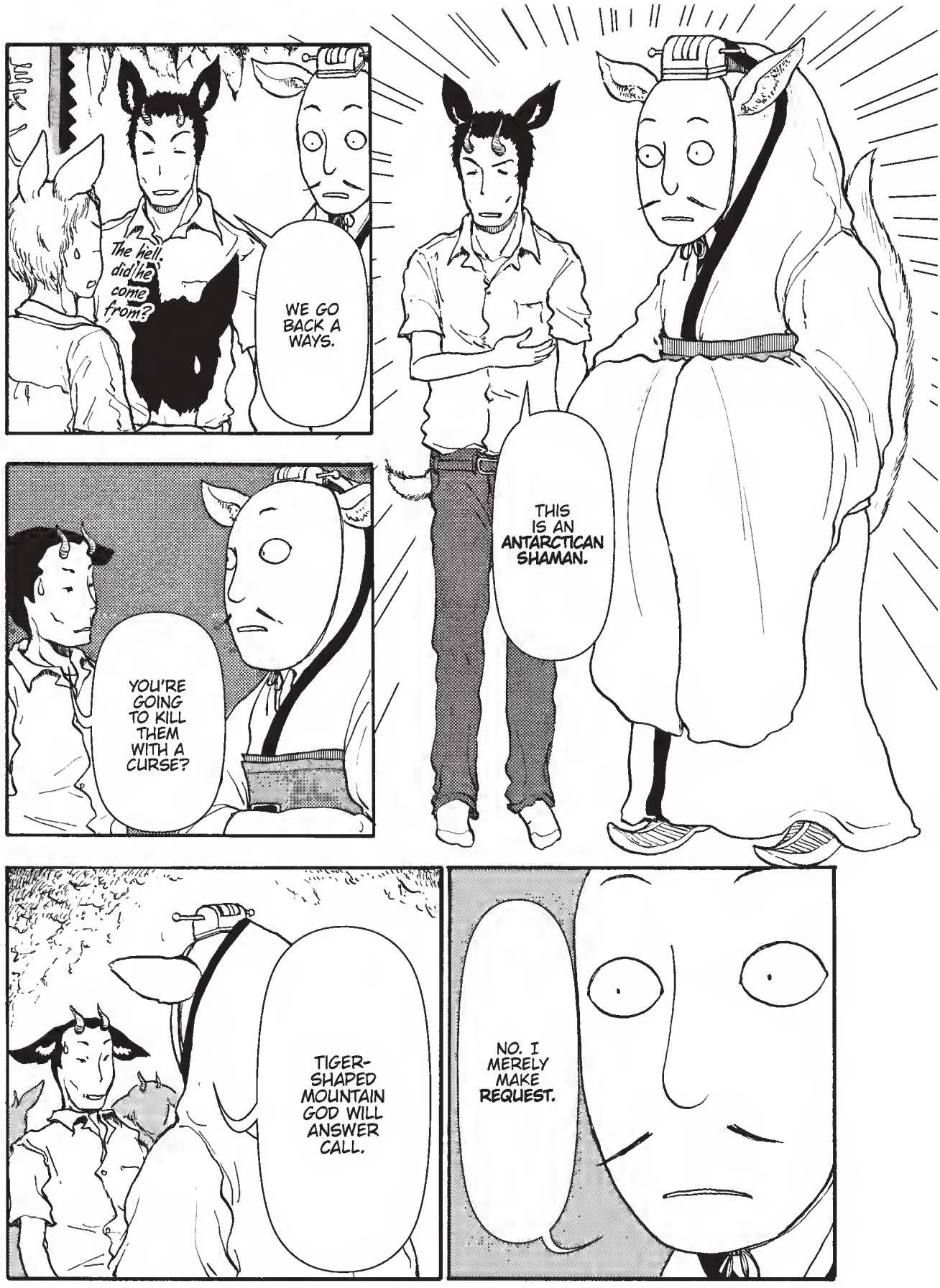
I ORDERED YOU ALL TO VACATE THE VILLAGE BY THE END OF THE MONTH, DID I NOT?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS, CHANCELLOR ?!
WE'VE BEEN LIVING HERE LONGER THAN THE REPUBLIC HAS EVEN EXISTED!
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST BOSS US AROUND WITHOUT A DISCUS-SION?!
I WILL PAY YOU, OF COURSE. YOU EACH GET TEN YUAN.
IF YOU'RE SEIZING OUR LAND, YOU HAVE TO PROVIDE REPARATIONS AND ASSISTED HOUSING!

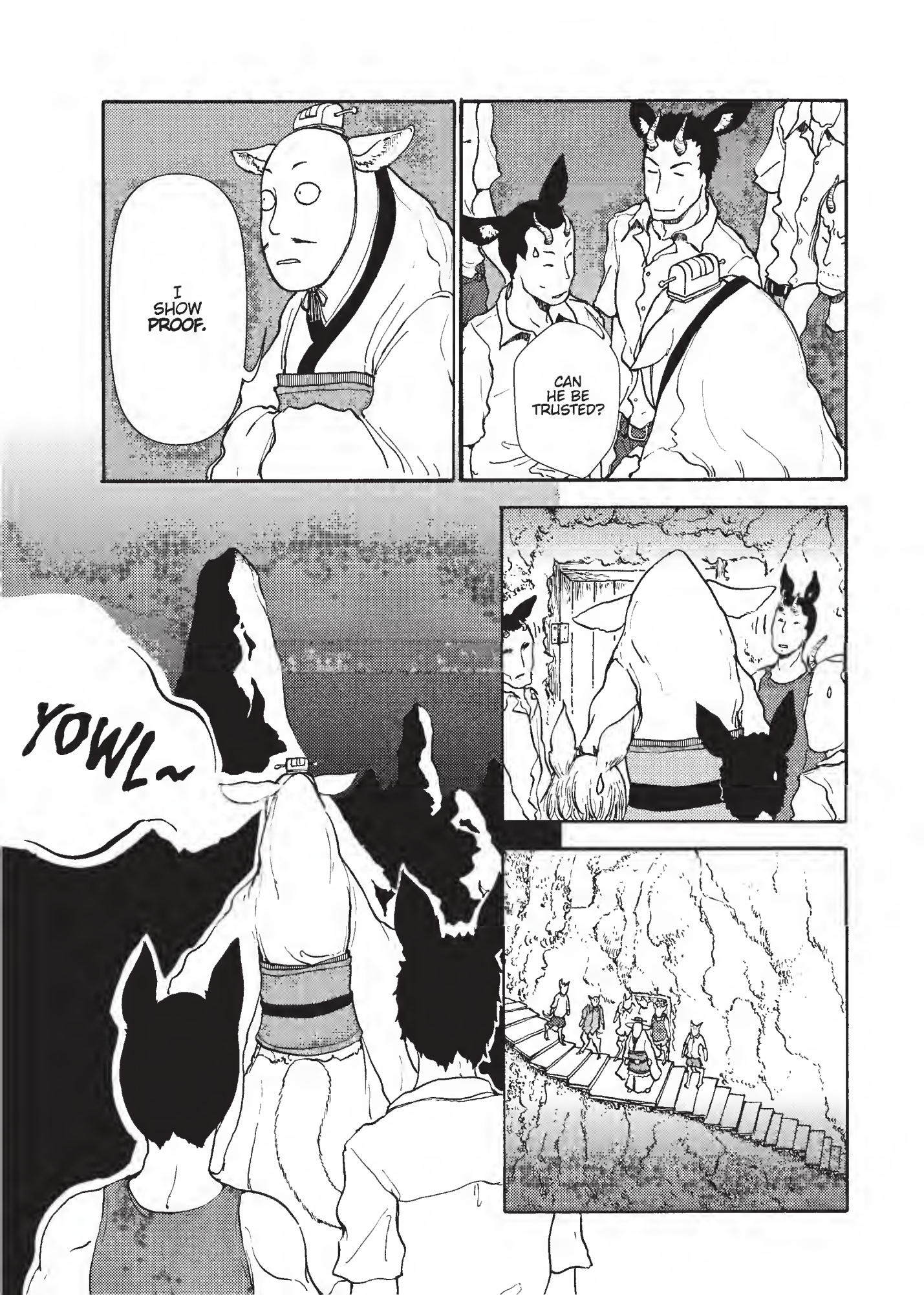
YOU'RE THE ONES BEING INSULTING!
WHY, YOU!
DON'T INSULT US! THAT WON'T BUY SQUAT!!
YOU FIGURE OUT THE REST DEMOCRATICALLY!
EITHER YOU TAKE THE MONEY AND GET OUT, OR WE'LL BEAT YOU OUT!
Division of Reparations
Pravincial Officials
Regianal Lawer Officials
Regianal Middle Officials
Regional Upper Officials
Village Officials
Underworld
Village Residents
THAT'S THE DIVISION DICTATED BY THE RULES!
AS A SPECIAL EXCEPTION, I'LL GIVE YOU UNTIL NOON THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.

THUN-
DER.
LIGHT-
NING.
ALL
RIGHT,
ENTER.
SO,
WHAT
DO WE
DO?
WELL,
WE CAN'T
JUST STAND
BY AND LET
THEM SEIZE
OUR LAND.

SO DO WE FIGHT BACK? JUST WITH THE CHANCELLOR'S THUGS ALONE, WE'RE ALREADY OUTNUMBERED.
AND OUR ANCESTORS' GRAVES ARE HERE.
WITHOUT OUR FIELDS OR PASTURES, WE'LL BE PENNILESS.
C...COUNT ME OUT IF THERE'S GONNA BE FIGHTING.
FOOL. EVEN IF WE BEAT THEM, NEXT IT'LL BE THE POLICE AND THE ARMY.
THOSE MEN ARE JUST HIRED RIFF-RAFF ANYWAY.
I'D SOONER FIGHT THAN SIT HERE AND DIE.
I'VE GOT A NEWBORN TO THINK ABOUT!
YOU TRAITOR!
WHAT'S THAT, YOU COWARD ?!

STOP.
THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS AT STAKE HERE! THIS IS ABOUT MORE THAN YOUR LITTLE BRAT!
YOU'RE A WISE MAN. GOT ANY GOOD IDEAS?
MAYOR.
WHAT ARE YOU SAY-ING?
WHAT ABOUT PUTTING A DEADLY CURSE ON THEM?

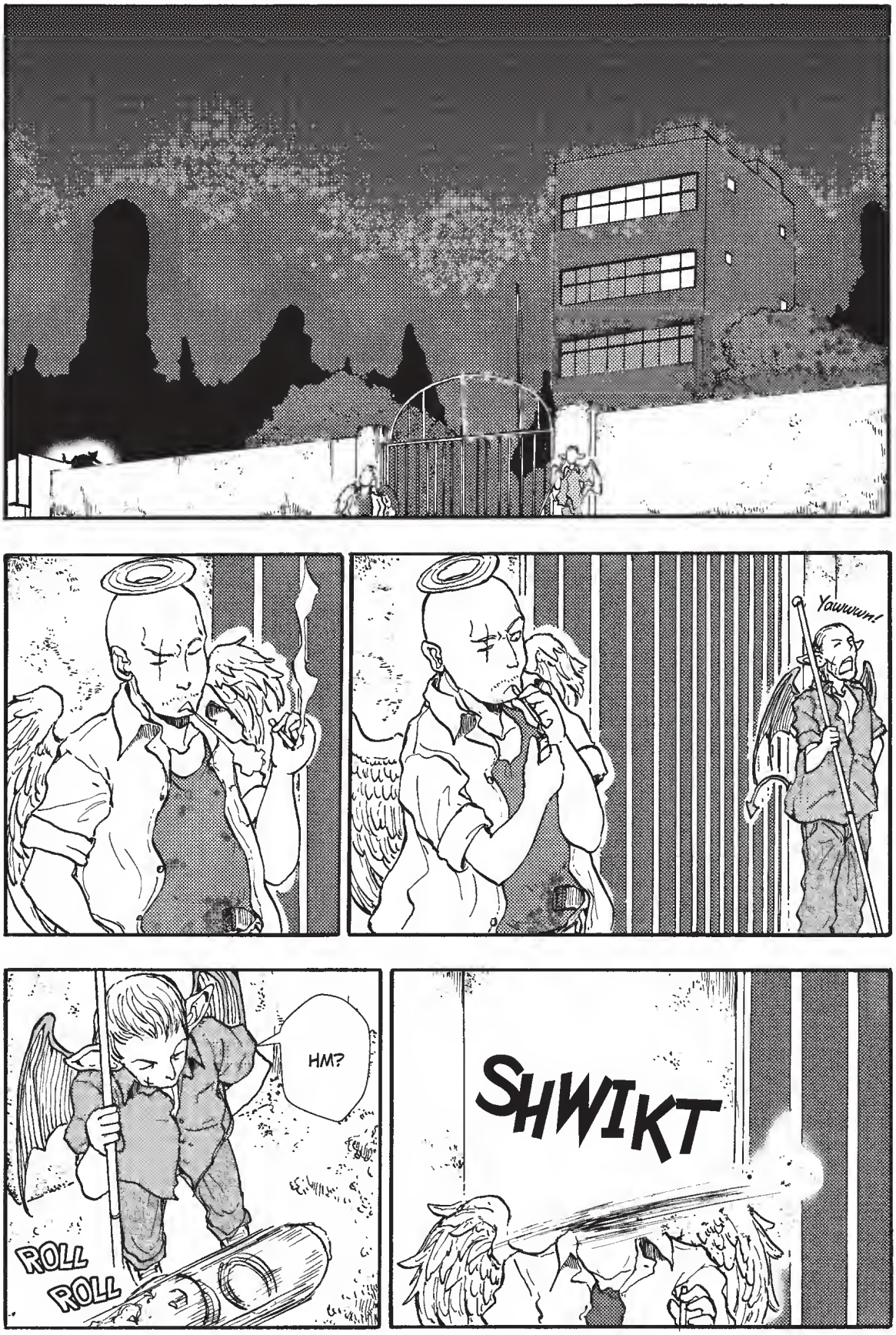

The hell did he come from?
WE GO BACK A WAYS.
THIS IS AN ANTARCTICAN SHAMAN.
YOU'RE GOING TO KILL THEM WITH A CURSE?
TIGER-SHAPED MOUNTAIN GOD WILL ANSWER CALL.
NO. I MERELY MAKE REQUEST.

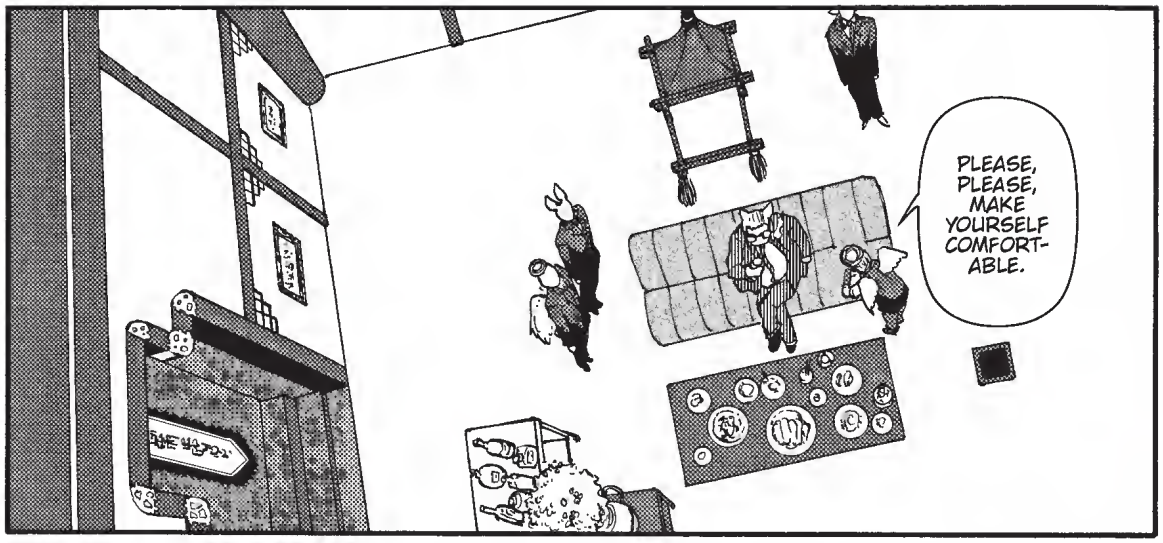

I SHOW PROOF.
CAN HE BE TRUSTED?
YOWL~

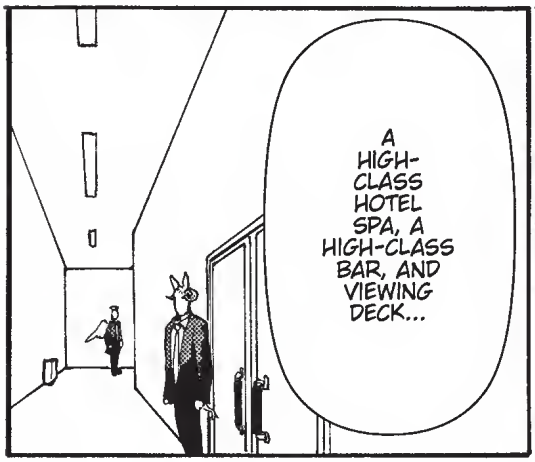
YOWWL~
THAT'S A WERETIGER, ISN'T IT?!
RIDICU-LOUS. AT THIS TIME OF YEAR?
THAT'S... A TIGER?
YOWL~
MOAN~
YEAH, AND YET...
NOW THAT'S RIDICU-LOUS.

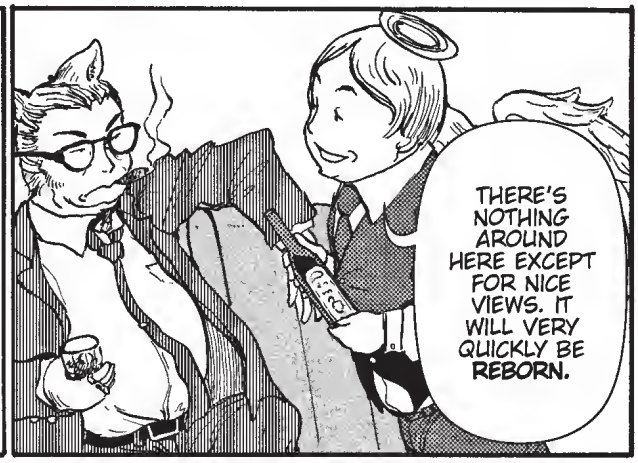
TWENTY-THREE GOATS. THIRTY-FIVE PIGS. TEN-THOUSAND YUAN.
YOWWL
TURN
Whoa!
THAT'S THE OFFERING?
WH... WHAT THE...?
THAT'S STEEP.
SOUNDS FISHY.
"OFFER-ING"?
THE REWARD.

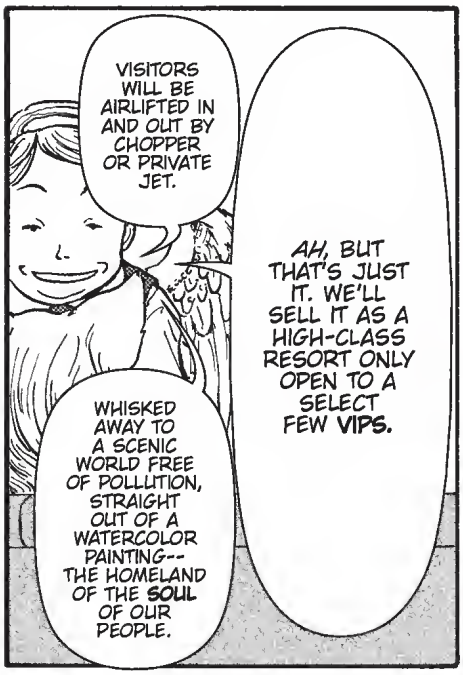
WHAT THE HELL. WE'RE DAMNED IF WE DON'T.
THAT'S RIGHT.
MAYOR, IT'S NOT THAT WE DON'T TRUST HIM, SINCE YOU INTRODUCED HIM 'N ALL, BUT...
ANY OBJEC-TIONS?
I'LL PAY THE MONEY. YOU ALL GATHER THE PIGS AND GOATS FROM THE VILLAGE.
AND MEAN-WHILE, PREPARE FOR A FIGHT.

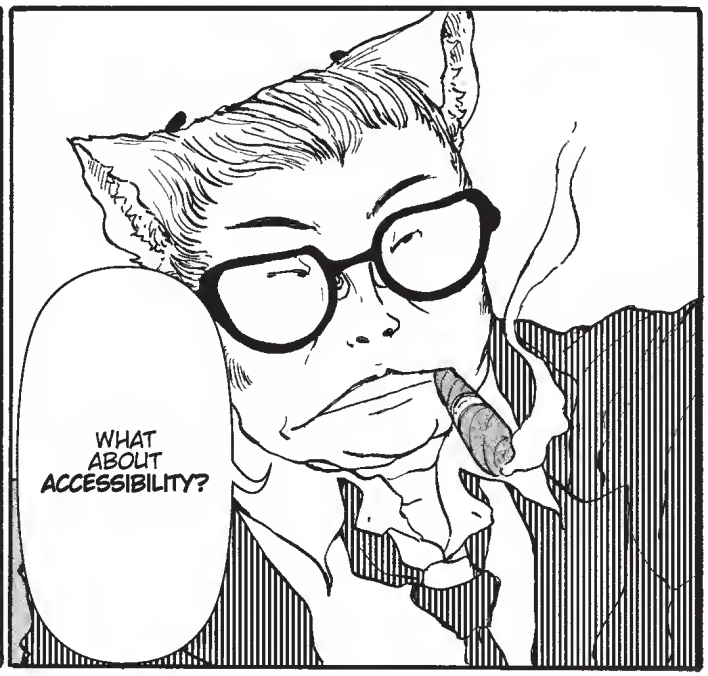

Yawwwn!
HM?
ROLL
ROLL
SHWIKT


PLEASE, PLEASE, MAKE YOURSELF COMFORT-ABLE.


A HIGH-CLASS HOTEL SPA, A HIGH-CLASS BAR, AND VIEWING DECK...

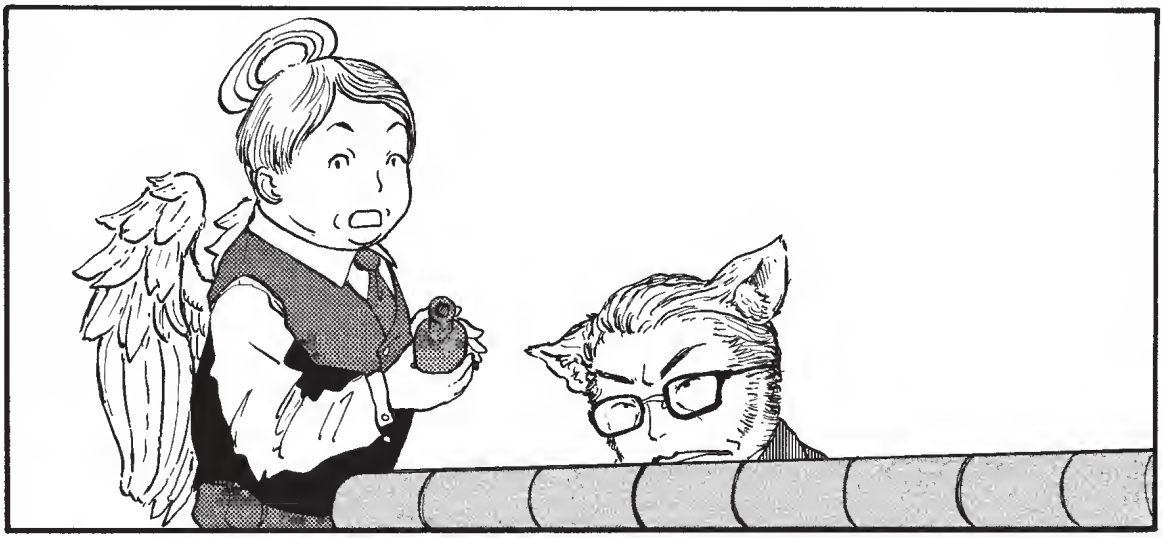

THERE'S NOTHING AROUND HERE EXCEPT FOR NICE VIEWS. IT WILL VERY QUICKLY BE **REBORN.**

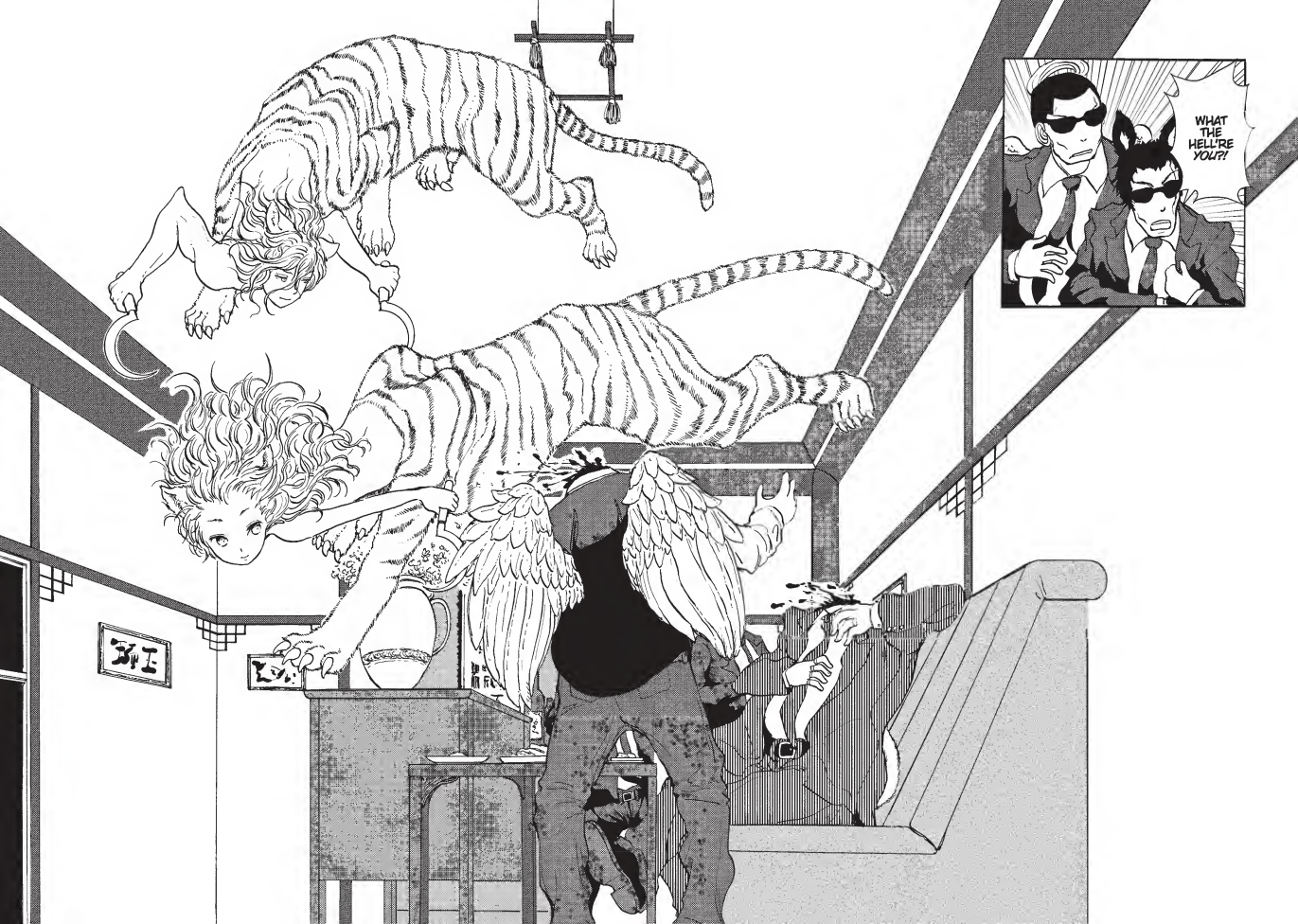

VISITORS WILL BE AIRLIFTED IN AND OUT BY CHOPPER OR PRIVATE JET.
AH, BUT THAT'S JUST IT. WE'LL SELL IT AS A HIGH-CLASS RESORT ONLY OPEN TO A SELECT FEW **VIPS.**
WHISKED AWAY TO A SCENIC WORLD FREE OF POLLUTION, STRAIGHT OUT OF A WATERCOLOR PAINTING-- THE HOMELAND OF THE **SOUL** OF OUR PEOPLE.

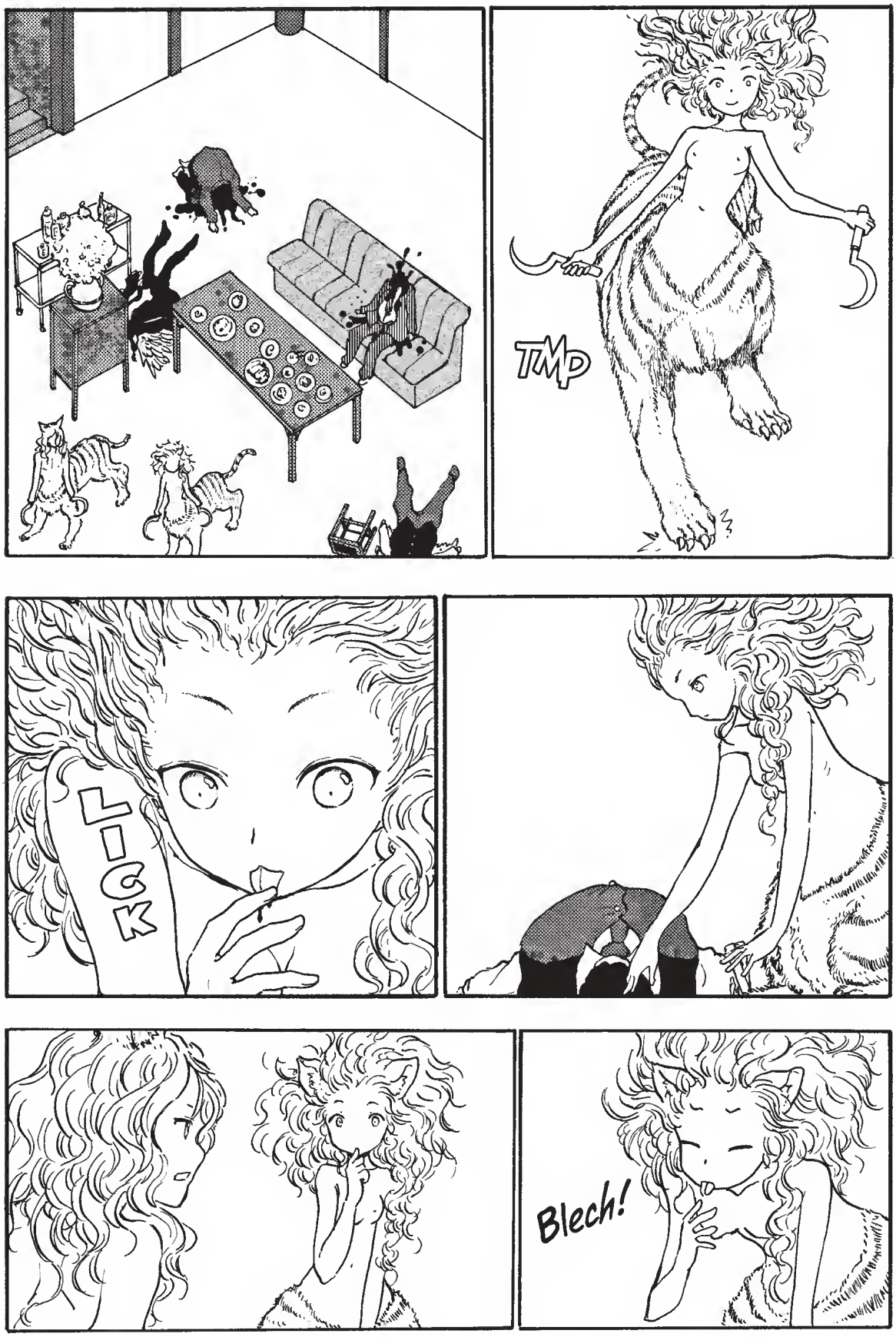

WHAT ABOUT **ACCESSIBILITY?**

HEY...
SIR, IT IS MY GREAT SHAME THAT--
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
THOUGH, I MUST SAY, THIS PLACE IS A LITTLE BIT *FILTHY.*
K-
CHK

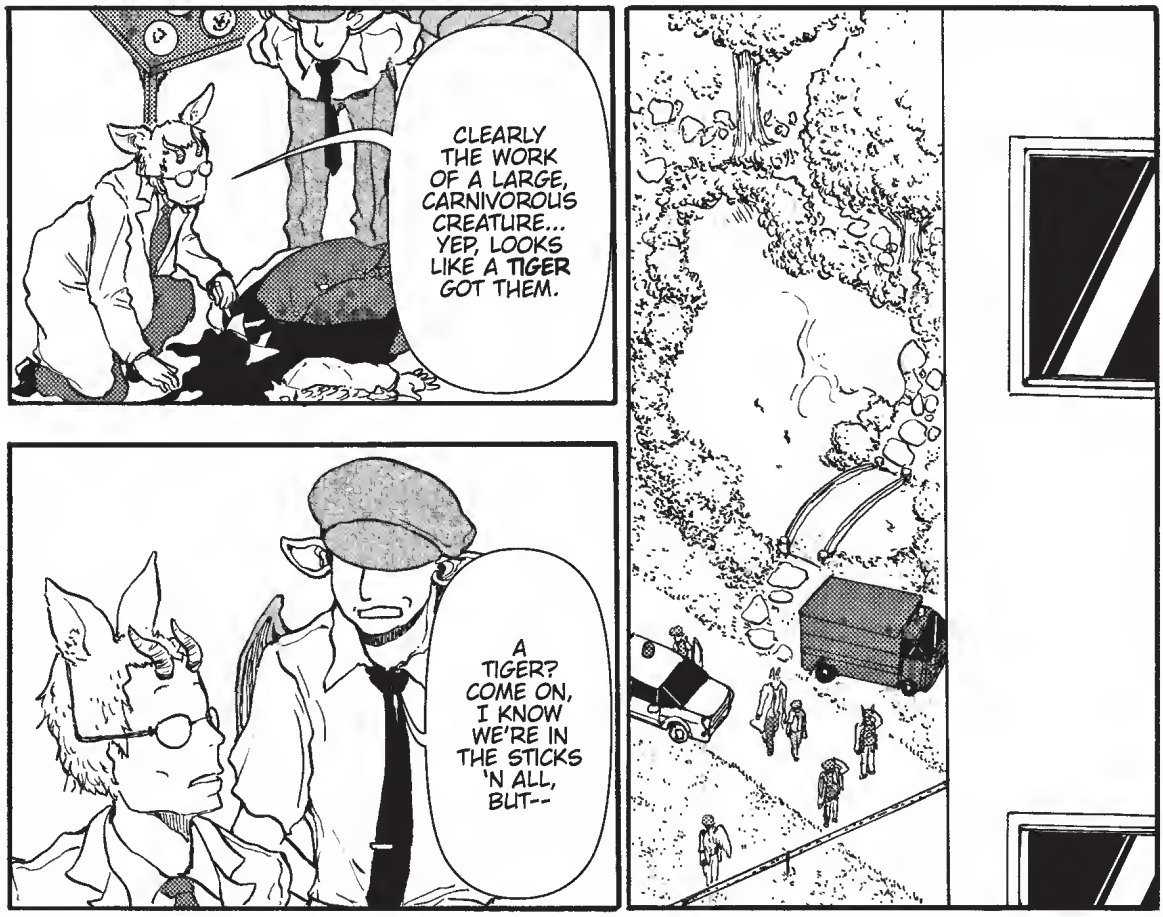
FWUMP



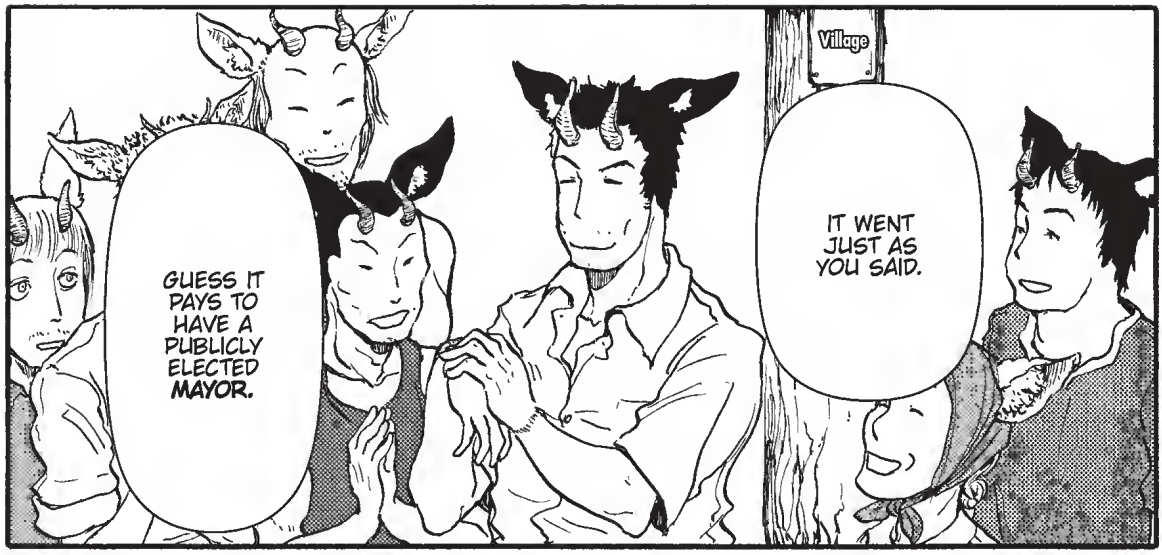

WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU?!


TMP
LICK
Blech!

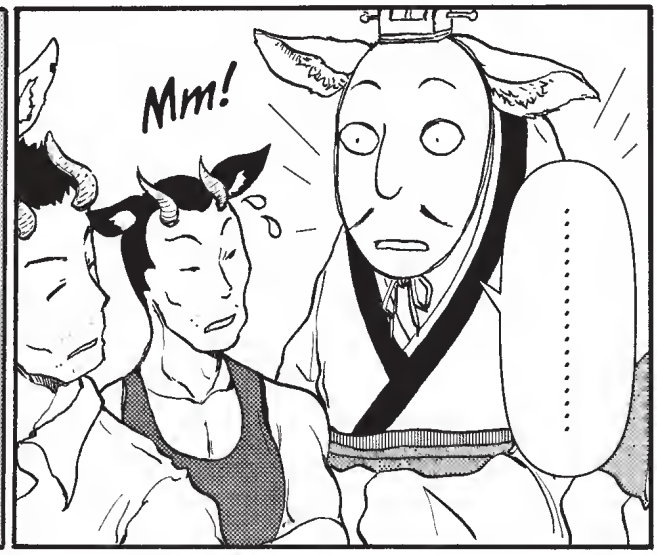
YOWL~

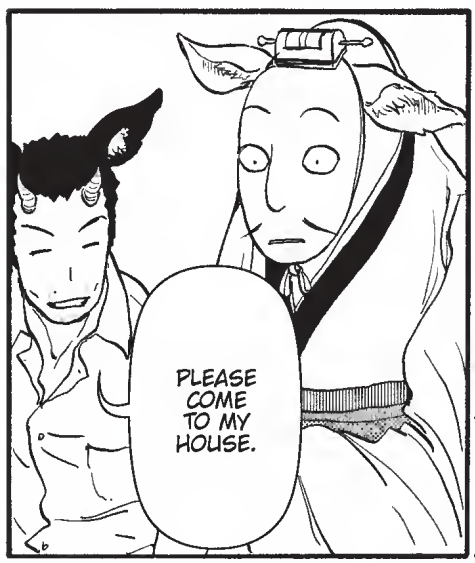

CLEARLY THE WORK OF A LARGE, CARNIVOROUS CREATURE... YEP, LOOKS LIKE A TIGER GOT THEM.
A TIGER? COME ON, I KNOW WE'RE IN THE STICKS 'N ALL, BUT--

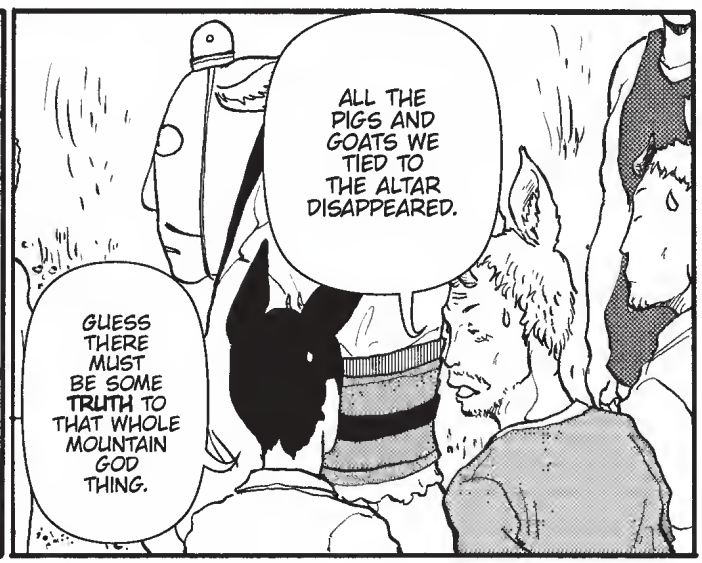
AH YEAH, THAT'D ADD UP.
PERHAPS THEY'D PREPARED A TIGER AS THE DINNER ENTERTAINMENT AND IT GOT OUT.
Get ready for a mountain hunt.
GUESS THE TIGER IS OUR BIGGEST LEAD RIGHT NOW.
We've rounded up the guys in charge though.
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN ARREST THE ENTIRE VILLAGE.
THIS IS WHAT THE PARTY EXECS GET FOR LIVIN' IT UP.

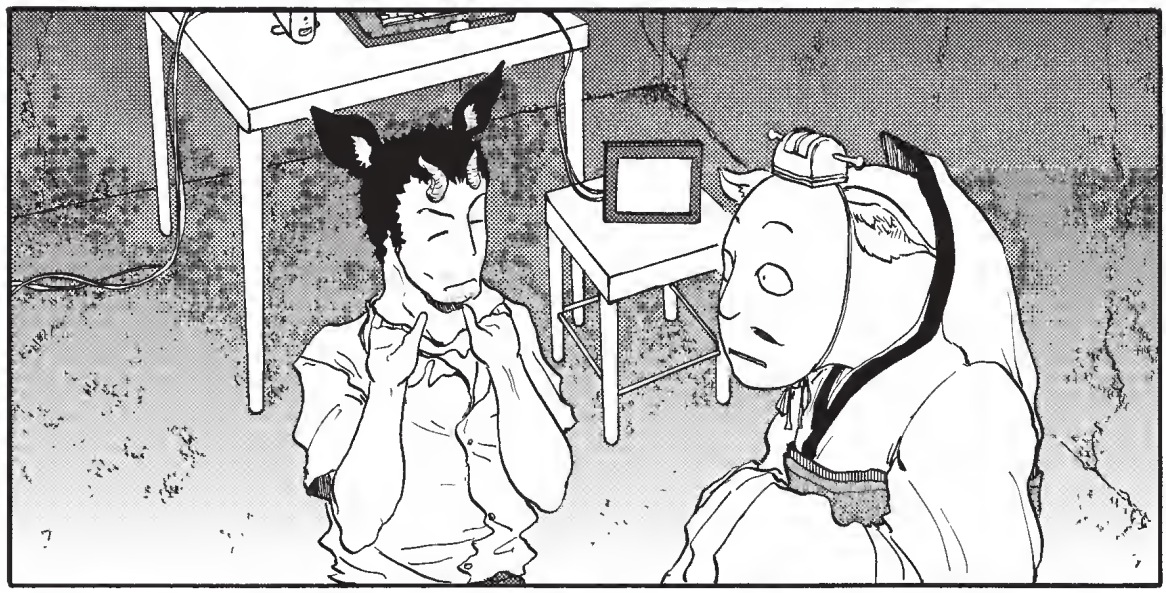

Village
IT WENT JUST AS YOU SAID.
GUESS IT PAYS TO HAVE A PUBLICLY ELECTED MAYOR.

WE'LL PAY THE MONEY. DON'T WANT TO BE EATEN UP BY A MOUNTAIN DEITY, NOW, DO WE?

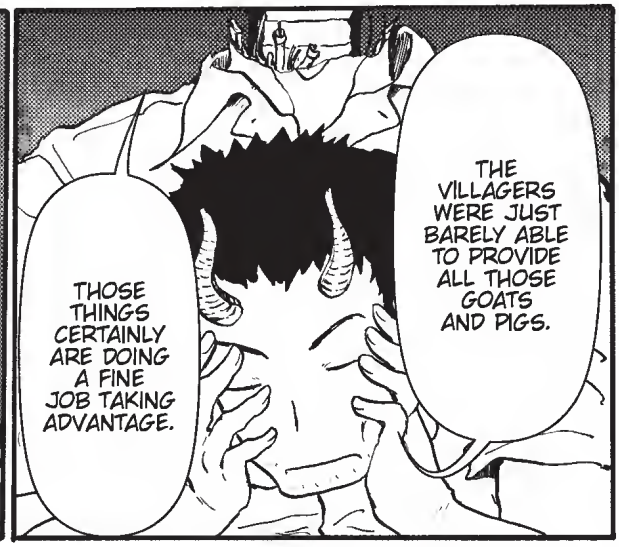

Mm!
.....


PLEASE COME TO MY HOUSE.

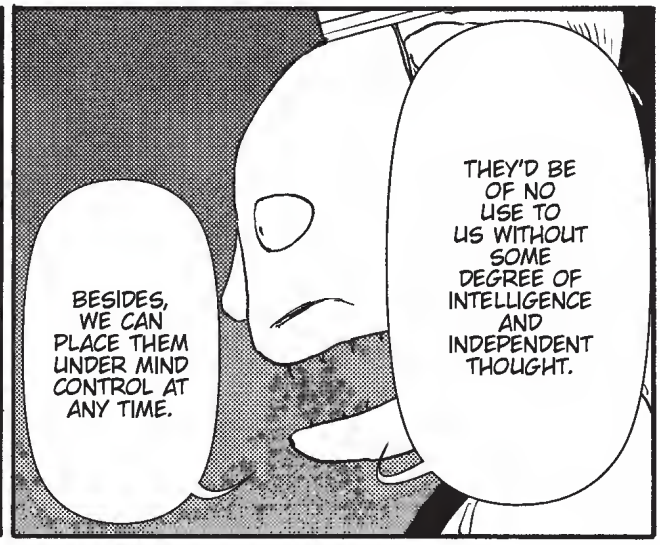

ALL THE PIGS AND GOATS WE TIED TO THE ALTAR DISAPPEARED.
GUESS THERE MUST BE SOME TRUTH TO THAT WHOLE MOUNTAIN GOD THING.



DON'T YOU THINK WE MADE THEM A BIT *TOO* CLEVER?


THOSE THINGS CERTAINLY ARE DOING A FINE JOB TAKING ADVANTAGE.
THE VILLAGERS WERE JUST BARELY ABLE TO PROVIDE ALL THOSE GOATS AND PIGS.

THERE'S NO PROBLEM. YOU NEEDN'T THINK AS A HUMAN.
I'VE NO BASIS FOR THIS, BUT I HAVE A PREMONITION THIS WILL END **BADLY.** IN OTHER WORDS, HOW THEY SAY, "ANXIOUS."


BESIDES, WE CAN PLACE THEM UNDER MIND CONTROL AT ANY TIME.
THEY'D BE OF NO USE TO US WITHOUT SOME DEGREE OF INTELLIGENCE AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT.

A CentaUr's Life

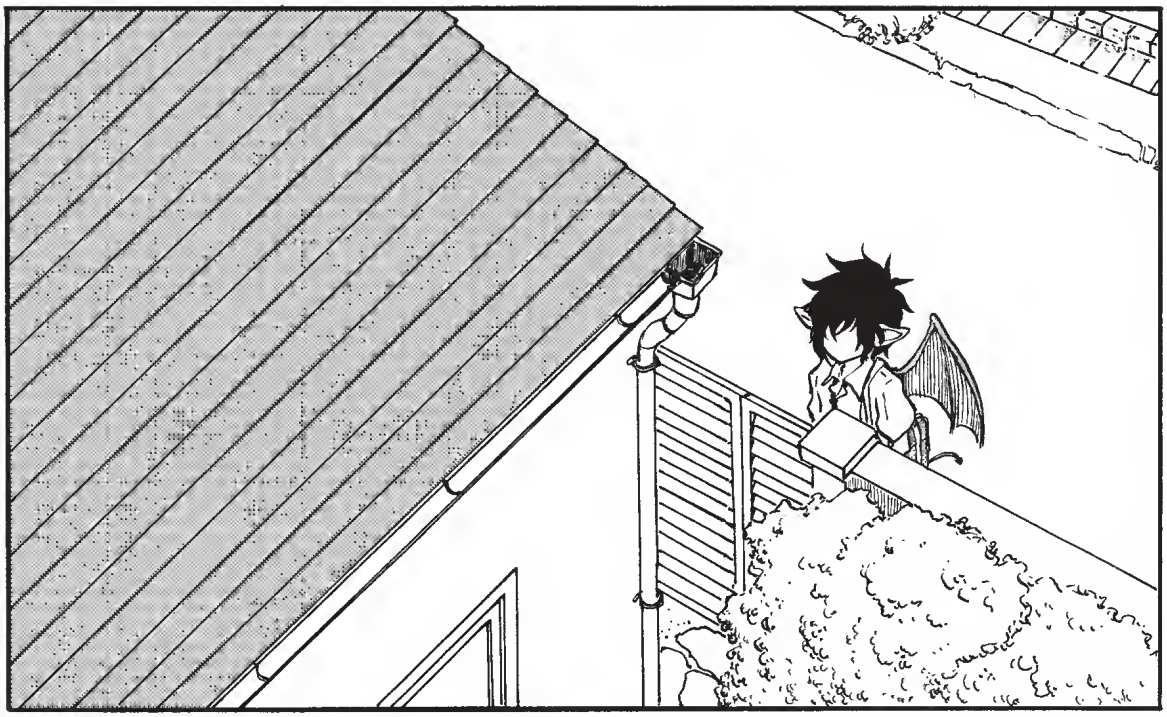
HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)
FUJIWARA NO MICHINAGA (966-1028)

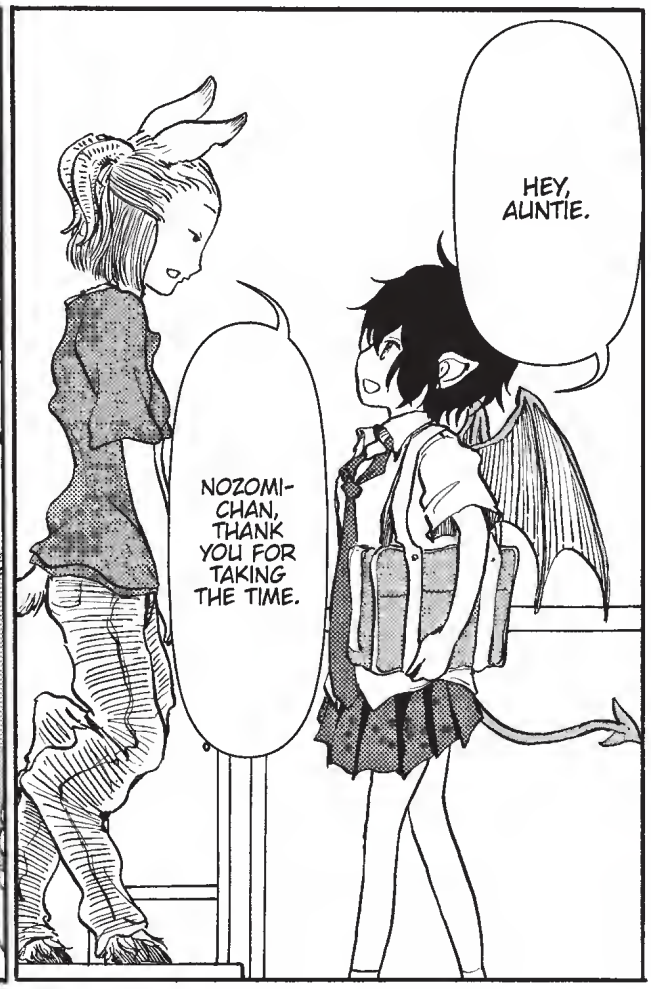
A POWERFUL ARISTOCRAT OF THE HEIAN PERIOD. MAINTAINED STRONG TIES WITH THE EMPEROR'S MATERNAL LINEAGE BY CONTINUALLY SENDING DAUGHTERS OFF TO BE EMPRESS, AND IN SO DOING WAS ABLE TO WIELD GREAT POLITICAL POWER, FIRST FROM THE POSITION OF *NAIRAN*, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXAMINING DOCUMENTS OF CORRESPONDENCE TO THE EMPEROR, AND EVENTUALLY FROM THE DE FACTO RULING POSITIONS OF *UDAIJIN* AND *SADAIJIN*. HIS "FULL MOON POEM" IS WIDELY KNOWN:

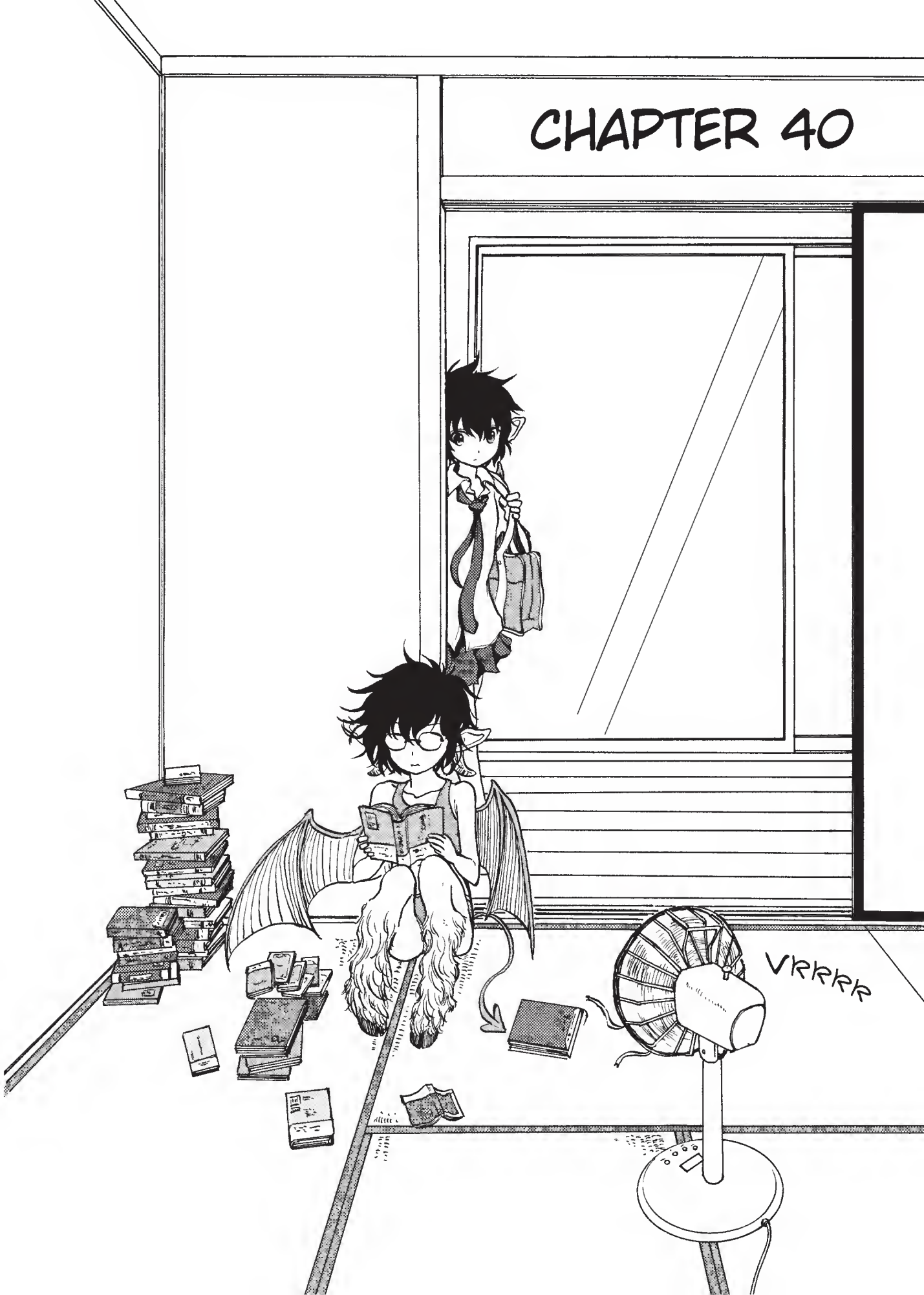
"THIS WORLD, I THINK,
IS INDEED MY WORLD.
LIKE THE FULL MOON I SHINE,
UNCOVERED BY ANY CLOUD"

ARISTOCRATS OF THIS ERA OFTEN LEFT DIARIES EXPLAINING THE PROPER PROCEDURE FOR CERTAIN CEREMONIES TO THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN, BUT MICHINAGA LEAVES BEHIND WHAT IS THOUGHT TO BE THE OLDEST REMAINING GENUINE DIARY, KNOWN AS *MIDO KANPAKUKI*. SINCE THE DIARY WAS LIKELY INTENDED FOR PERSONAL MEMOS, IT OFFERS AN UNFILTERED GLIMPSE AT MICHINAGA'S THOUGHTS, AS WELL AS A WINDOW INTO LIFE AT THAT TIME. IT IS AN INVALUABLE HISTORICAL TEXT. INCIDENTALLY, DESPITE THE TITLE OF THE DIARY, MICHINAGA WAS NOT IN FACT APPOINTED TO THE POSITION OF *KANPAKU* (A CHIEF ADVISOR TO THE EMPEROR).

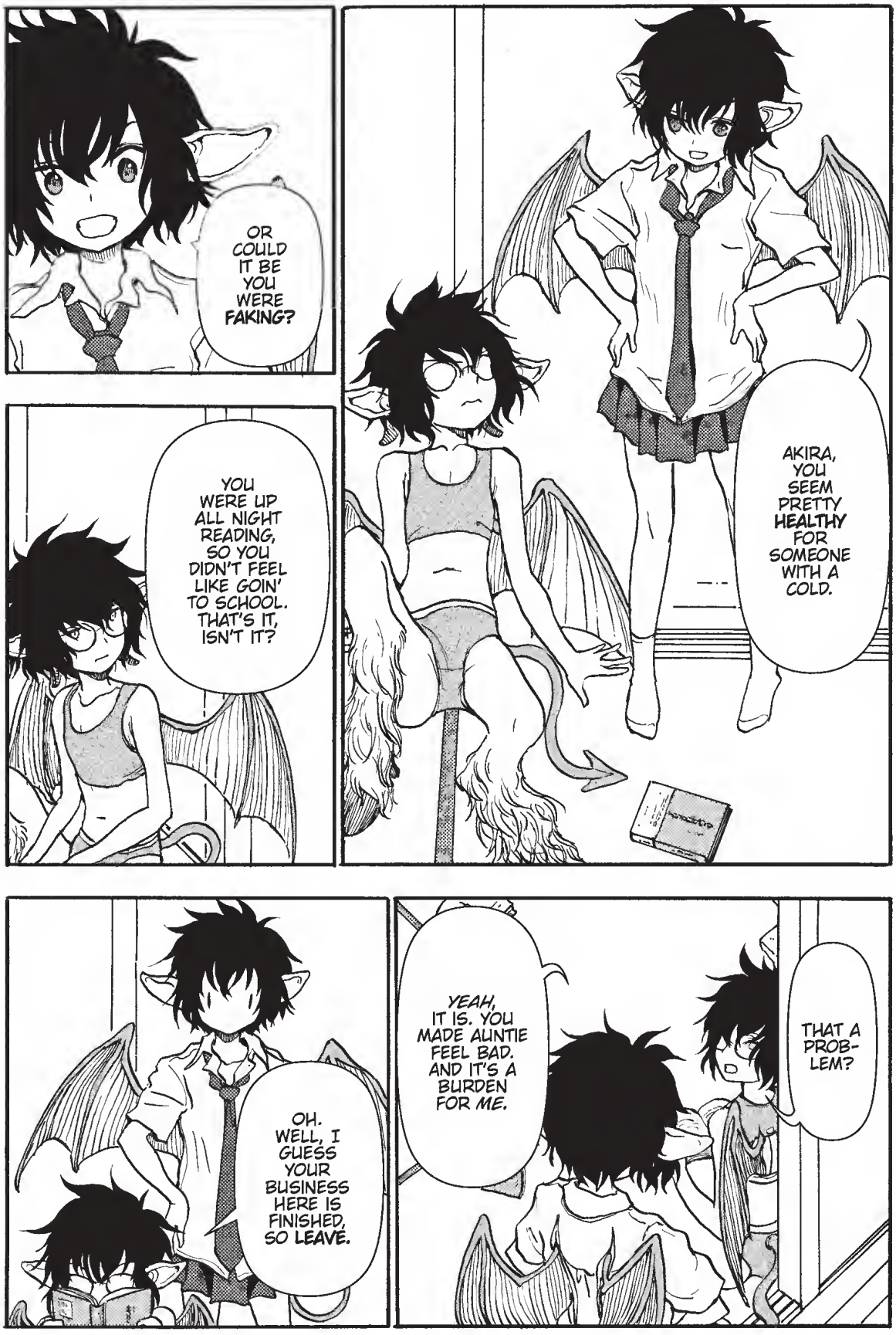
THE TERM *ARISTOCRAT* MAY ELICIT IMAGES OF LAVISH LUXURY, BUT LIFE FOR THE HEIAN ARISTOCRAT WAS IN FACT RATHER GRUELING. DAYTIME WAS RESERVED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES WHILE FORMAL BANQUETS WERE HELD AT NIGHT. THEY WERE ALSO REQUIRED TO MAKE FREQUENT APPEARANCES AT LITERARY SALONS. ON THAT NOTE, IT BEARS MENTIONING THAT MICHINAGA WAS A CONTEMPORARY OF MURASAKI SHIKIBU, AND IS SAID TO BE HAVE PROVIDED ONE OF THE MODELS FOR HER *TALE OF GENJI*, AND WAS EVEN THE FIRST PERSON TO READ IT.

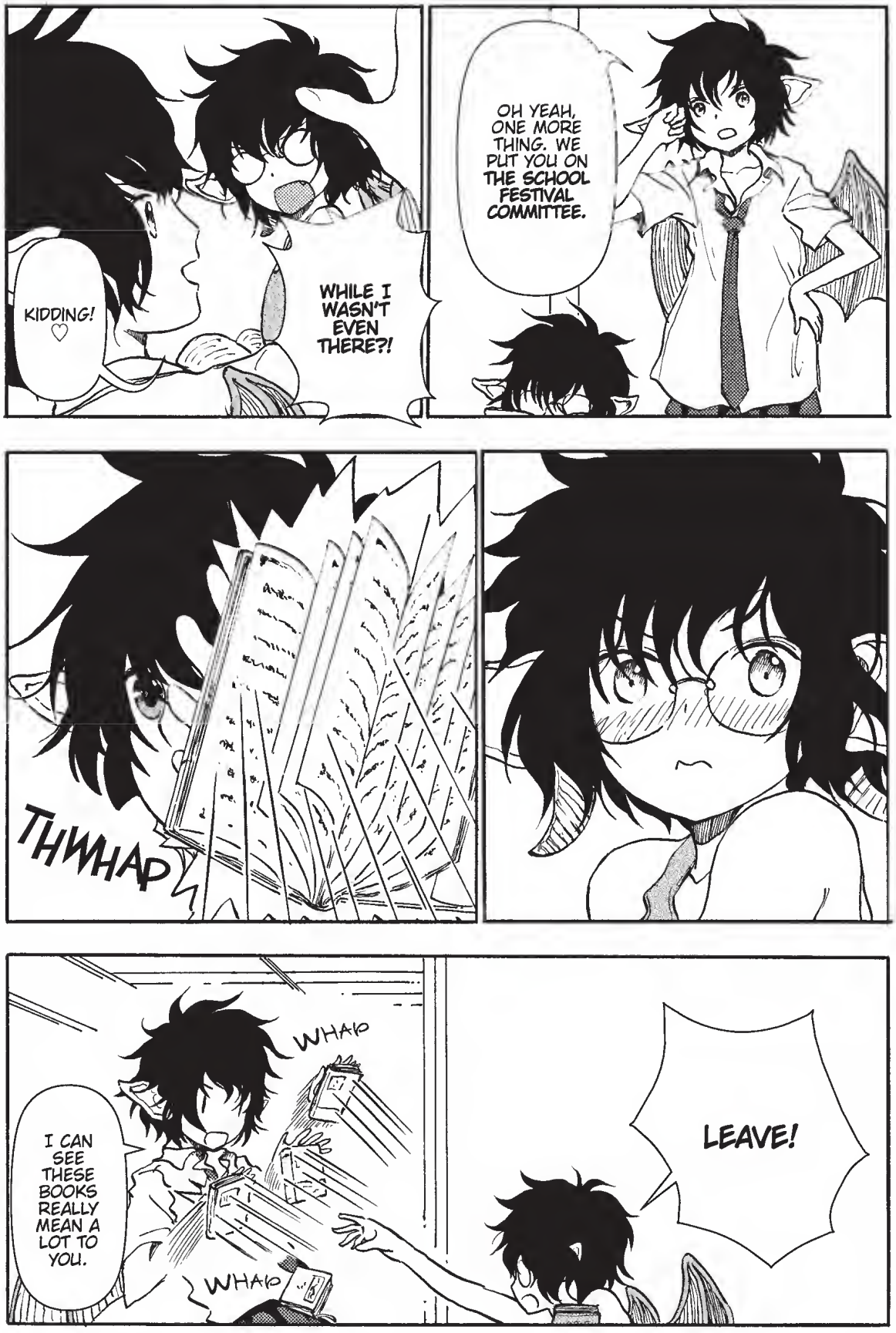



HEY, AUNTIE.
NOZOMI-CHAN, THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME.


CHAPTER 40
VRRRR

BAH!
SLINK
JEEZ, THAT'S DANGE-ROUS.
WHAP
SO WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I DID IT BECAUSE IT WAS YOU.
ANYONE ELSE WOULD'VE HAD A BROKEN NOSE RIGHT NOW.


AKIRA, YOU SEEM PRETTY **HEALTHY** FOR SOMEONE WITH A COLD.
OR COULD IT BE YOU WERE **FAKING?**
YOU WERE UP ALL NIGHT READING, SO YOU DIDN'T FEEL LIKE GOIN' TO SCHOOL. THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?
THAT A PROB-LEM?
YEAH, IT IS. YOU MADE AUNTIE FEEL BAD. AND IT'S A BURDEN FOR *ME.*
OH. WELL, I GUESS YOUR BUSINESS HERE IS FINISHED, SO **LEAVE.**

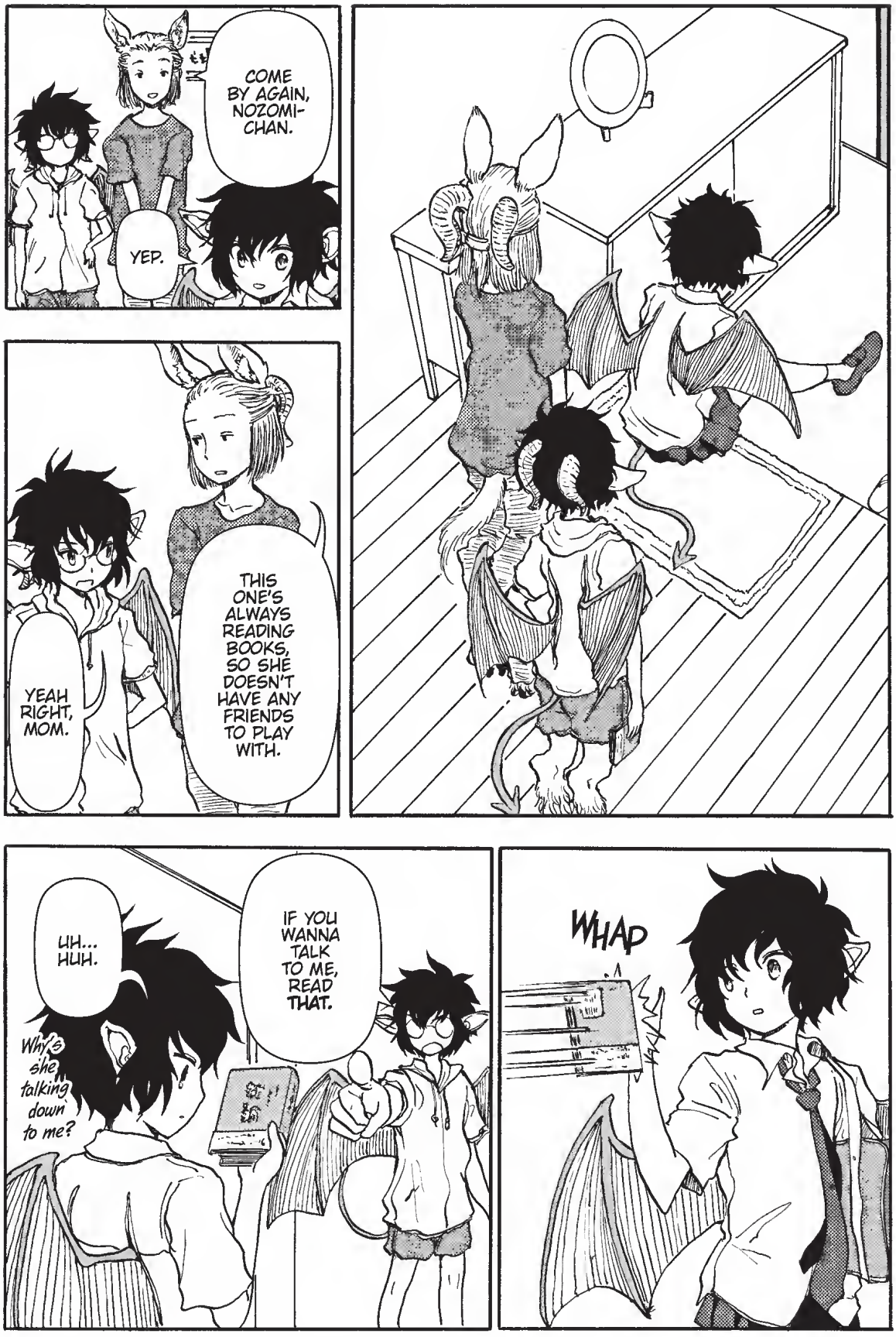

OH YEAH, ONE MORE THING. WE PUT YOU ON THE SCHOOL FESTIVAL COMMITTEE.
WHILE I WASN'T EVEN THERE?!
KIDDING! ♡
THWHAP
LEAVE!
WHAP
WHAP
I CAN SEE THESE BOOKS REALLY MEAN A LOT TO YOU.

FWIP
IS READING REALLY THAT FUN?
MORE FUN THAN DEALING WITH DUMB IDIOTS.

LOOKS AGONIZING.
EEK!
Hey.
GO AWAY, YOU'RE ANNOYING.
God da--!
Oho!

WHY ARE YOU BOTHER-ING ME?!
PIN
SWING
What the--?
YOU'RE OUT OF SHAPE, AKIRA.
ALL RIIIGHT! THAT'S A PIN.
GET OFF... YA LITTLE ...!

HOW?
THAT'S CHEATING!
But with your own cousin...
OH, IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING?
MOOOM! WILL YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT HER?!


COME BY AGAIN, NOZOMI-CHAN.
YEP.
THIS ONE'S ALWAYS READING BOOKS, SO SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS TO PLAY WITH.
YEAH RIGHT, MOM.
WHAP
IF YOU WANNA TALK TO ME, READ THAT.
UH... HUH.
Why's she talking down to me?

DID YOU READ THE BOOK?
OH, I'VE READ THAT ONE.
ER, THIS THING'S REALLY HARD, SO...

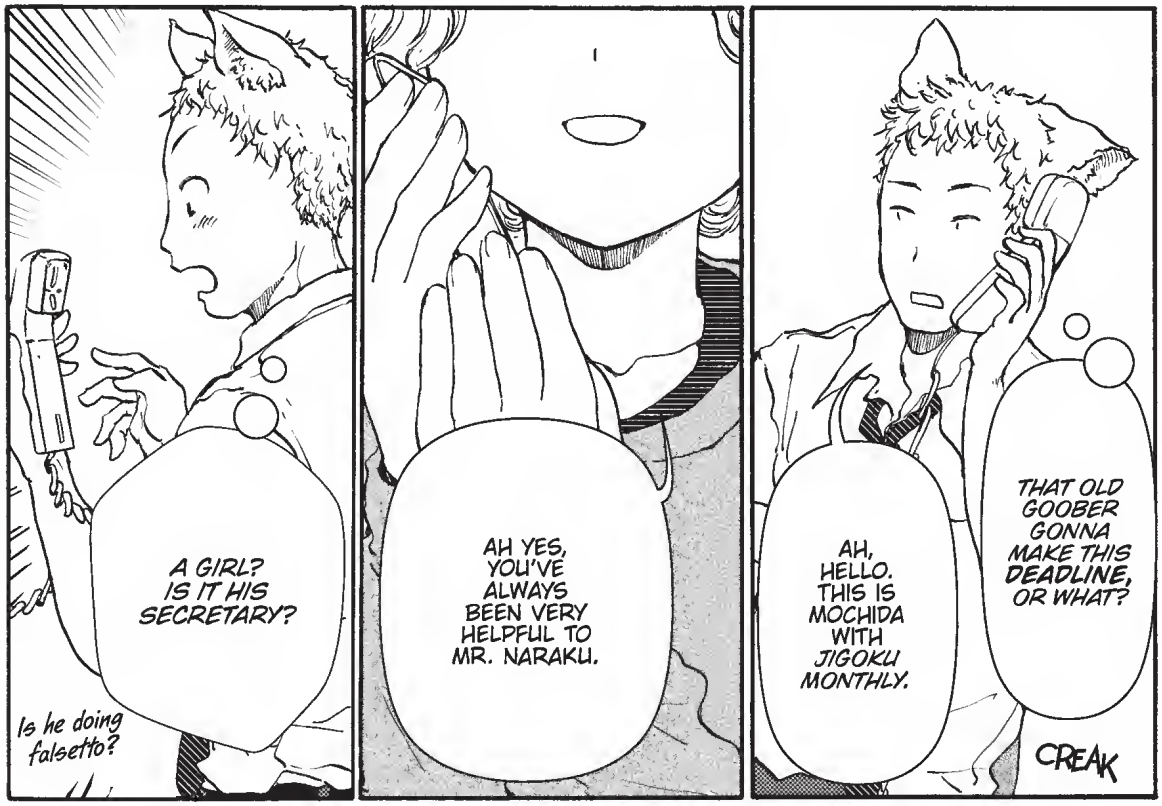
Eheh...
WELL, DON'T ACT LIKE YOU KNOW IF YOU BARELY READ IT.
WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE GALOIS THEORY? OR THE SOLUTION TO THE POINCARÉ CONJECTURE?
UMM, I DIDN'T REALLY GET THAT INTO IT...
SLINK
PFFT! NOT REALLY.
AKIRA-CHAN, YOU'RE SO SMART.
I'M NO GOOD AT MATH. COME HELP ME PICK OUT A STUDY GUIDE.
WHAAAT? NO WAY.
AWW, COME ON. WE'LL GO TO THE BOOKSTORE ON THE WAY HOME!

A CentaUr's Life

HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)
KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE (?-1336)

A GENERAL OF THE SOUTHERN IMPERIAL COURT DURING THE *NANBOKU-CHO* PERIOD ("SOUTH AND NORTH COURTS PERIOD") AT THE TAIL END OF THE KAMIKURA PERIOD. HAILED AS A HERO PRIOR TO WWII AS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF SAMURAI LOYALTY TO THE EMPEROR GO-DAIGO, AND AGAIN IN THE POST-WAR ERA AS A REVOLUTIONARY HERO OF CLASS STRUGGLE. AS A NON-*GOKENIN*, HE FELL OUTSIDE THE COMMAND OF THE KAMIKURA BAKUFU, AND LITTLE IS KNOWN OF THE EARLIER HALF OF HIS LIFE, BUT GIVEN THAT HE IS REFERRED TO AS AN *AKUTO* (WRONG-DOER) IN WHAT FEW HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS EXIST, IT CAN BE SURMISED THAT HE LIKELY TOOK PART IN VARIOUS *SHOEN* CONFLICTS. IT CAN ALSO BE SURMISED FROM THE FACT THAT THE TITLE OF *HYOE NO JO* (LIEUTENANT OF THE MIDDLE PALACE GUARD) IS LISTED ALONGSIDE HIS NAME, THAT HE MAY HAVE HAD TIES WITH THE IMPERIAL COURT AND THUS EMPEROR GO-DAIGO *BEFORE* THE FALL OF THE BAKUFU.

DURING THIS PERIOD, THE KAMIKURA BAKUFU HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF A MONGOL INVASION IN ORDER TO SECURE COMMAND OVER THE PREVIOUSLY UNCONTROLLED SAMURAI OF THE WESTERN PROVINCE, PLACING DOMINANCE OVER ALL OF JAPAN WITHIN THEIR GRASP. THE TOKUSO FAMILY, WHICH WAS THE DIRECT LINE OF REGENCY IN THE HOJO CLAN AND THE PRIMARY HOLDER OF POWER WITHIN THE KAMIKURA BAKUFU, HAD ALSO SECURED FORCES IN EVERY REGION. PLACED IN OBVIOUSLY DISADVANTAGEOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE NEVERTHELESS TOOK TO ARMS. PURSUED BY THE BAKUFU'S MASSIVE ARMY, MASASHIGE LED A CUNNING DEFENSE OF CASTLES AT CHIHAYA AND AKASAKA, CONTRIBUTING GREATLY IN TIME TO THE ULTIMATE DOWNFALL OF THE KAMIKURA. HOWEVER, BAD BLOOD BETWEEN THE EMPEROR GO-DAIGO AND ONE PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE ANTI-SHOGUNATE FORCE, ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI, LED TO A WAR BETWEEN THE TWO, AND MASASHIGE WAS FINALLY KILLED IN BATTLE AT MINATOGAWA.


THAT OLD GOOBER GONNA MAKE THIS DEADLINE, OR WHAT?
CREAK
AH, HELLO. THIS IS MOCHIDA WITH JIGOKU MONTHLY.
AH YES, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN VERY HELPFUL TO MR. NARAKU.
A GIRL? IS IT HIS SECRETARY?
Is he doing falsetto?

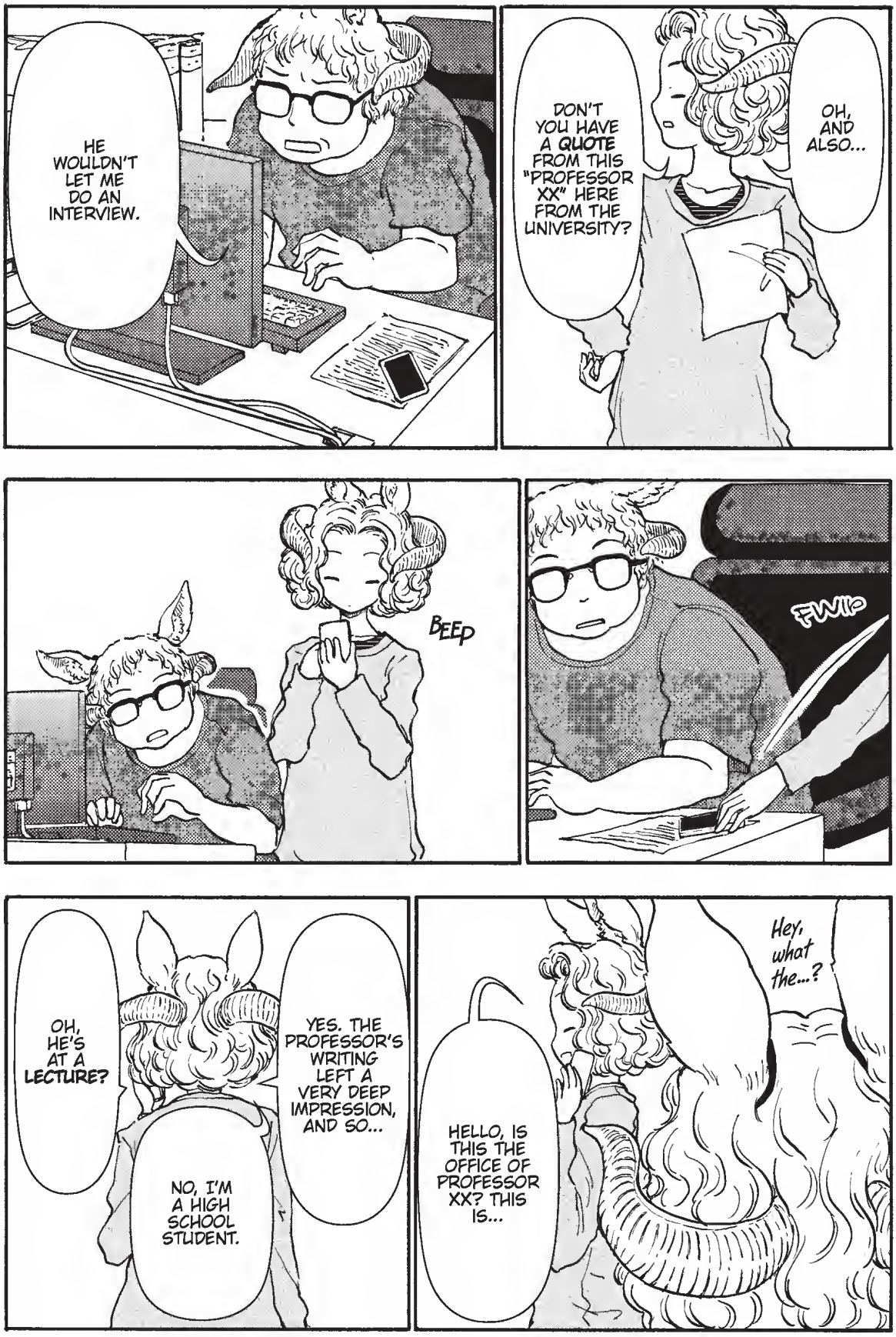
CHAPTER 41

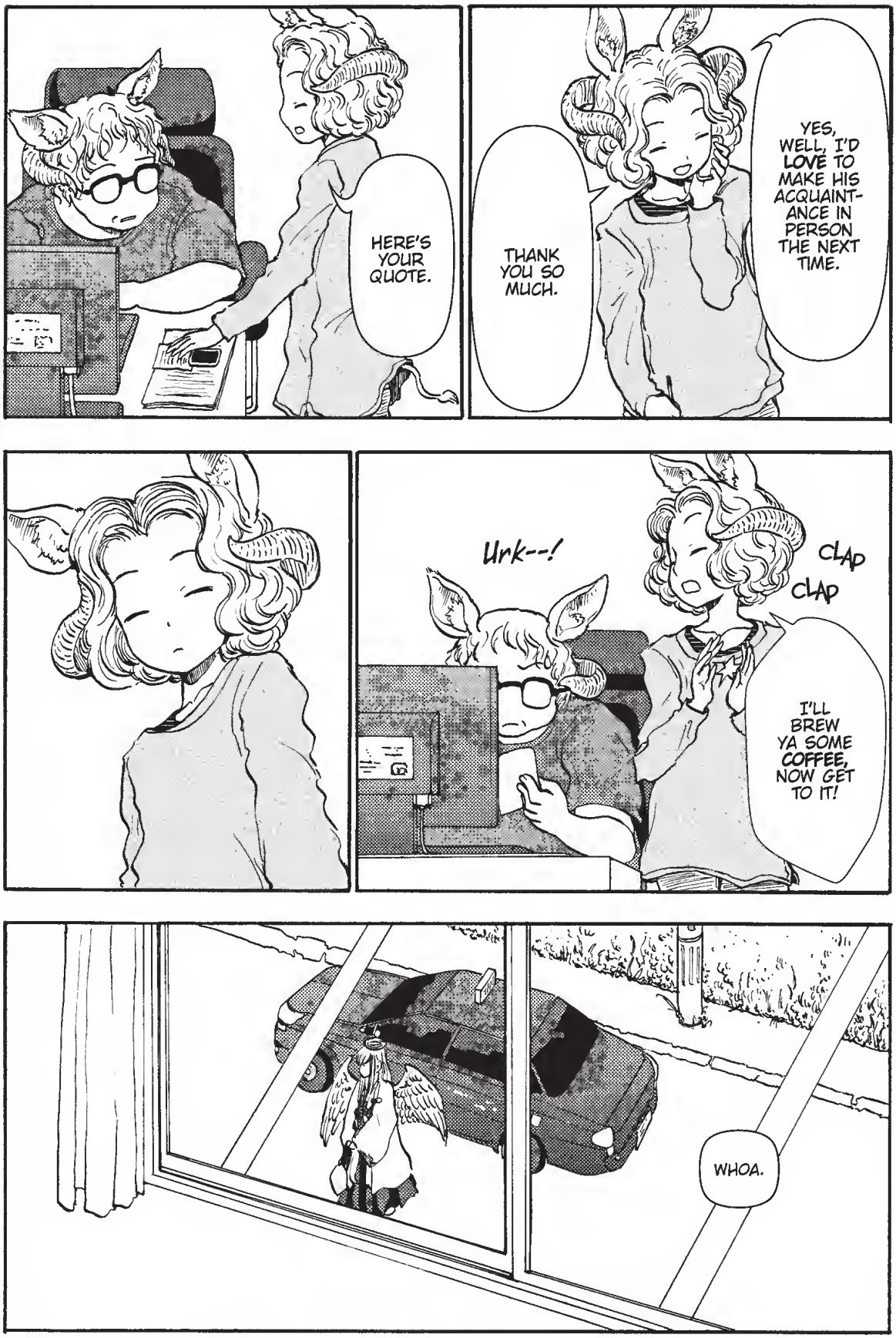
YES.
YES.
THANK YOU, BYE-BYE NOW! ♡
YES, HE'LL BE SURE TO EMAIL YOU BY THIS EVENING, THEN.

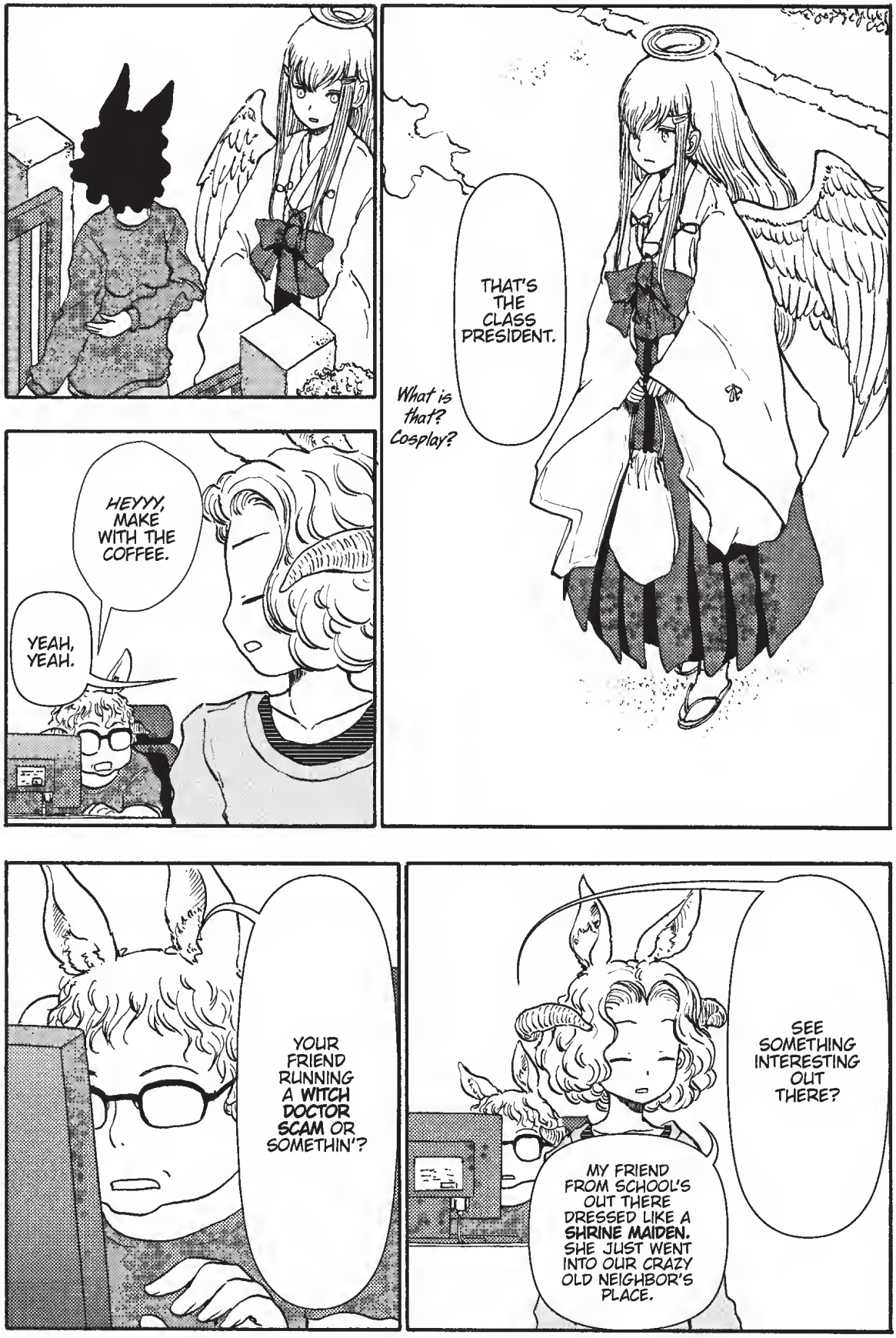
THAT MEANS YOU'VE GOT UNTIL SIX O'CLOCK, POP.
BEEP
THAT MEANS SUBMITTING THAT MANUSCRIPT BY THE DEADLINE.
TUNE TUNE
WELL THEN, FULFILL YOUR FATHERLY RESPONS-IBILITIES.
FINE, WHATEVER, BUT PLEASE STOP CALLING ME "POP." IT'S NOT FEMININE.
Why not "dad," or "father dearest"?
I GET IT, JUST KEEP TYPING.
ESPECIALLY NOW, WHEN THE WHOLE INDUSTRY IS IN THE DUM--
YEAH, WELL, BELIEVE IT OR NOT...
...KEEPING TWO KIDS FED AIN'T THAT EASY.

EH. HE DOES PRETTY WELL.
BY THE WAY, IS THAT NARAKU GOOB... UH, GUY ACTUALLY SELLING?
OH NO, IT'S JUST THAT IT SOUNDED LIKE HE HAD A SECRETARY JUST NOW AND I WAS SURPRISED HE COULD AFFORD ONE.
BUT WHY DO YOU ASK?
HIS BOOK SALES SPIKE EVERY TIME IT'S FEATURED ON TV.
EHK Feature
Death Row Convict Asahaka: An Evil Pedigree
HIS UNDER-COVER CULT INVESTIGATION DURING THE INKO INCIDENT WAS POPULAR.
WELL, I SUSPECT HE WASN'T BORN AN OVERWEIGHT OLD FART.
WH... YOU MEAN THAT GOOB-- THAT GUY IS MARRIED?
THAT WAS PROBABLY HIS DAUGHTER.

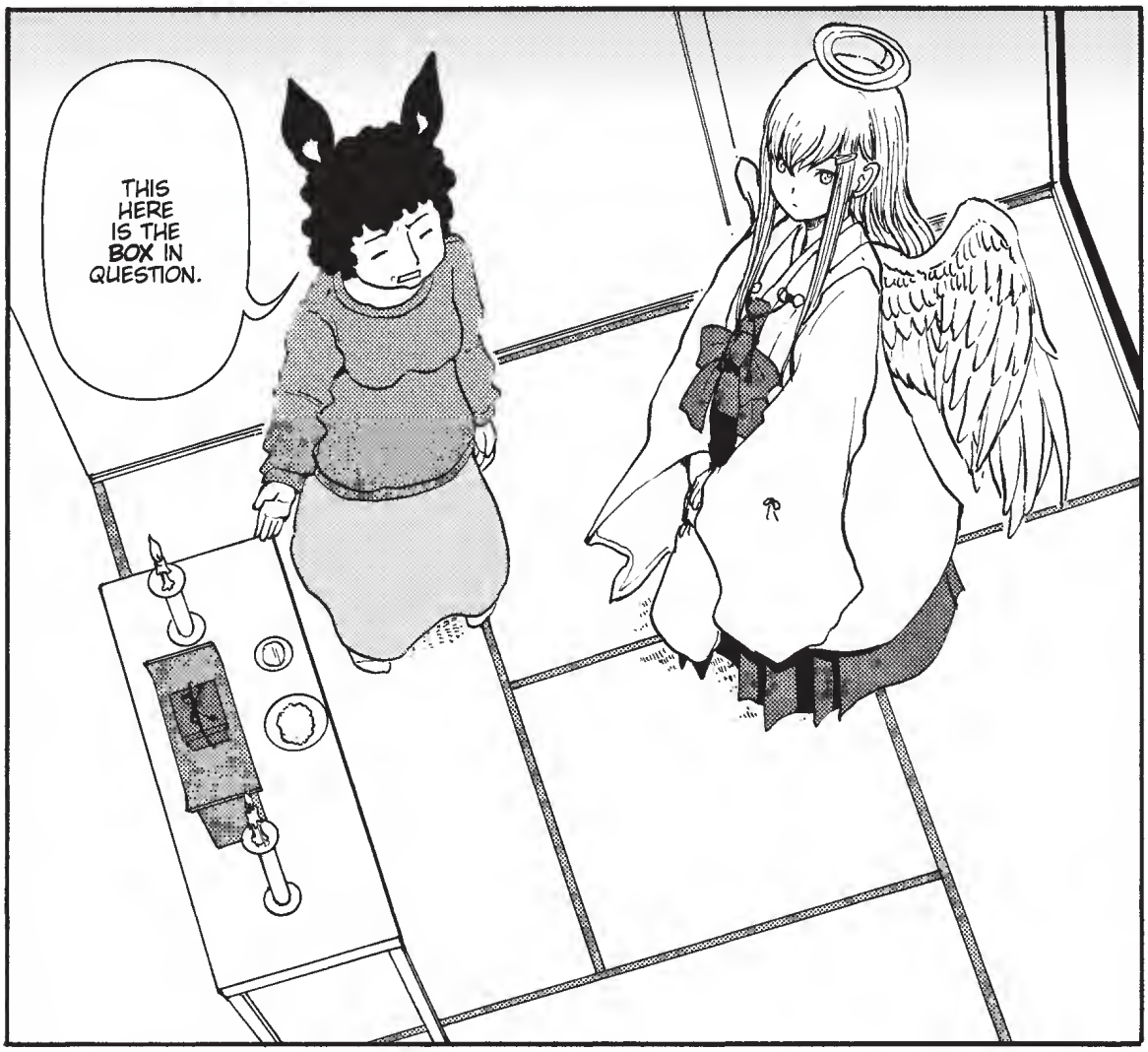
IN JUNIOR HIGH, I THINK... NO, NO, HIGH SCHOOL.
I HEAR SHE'S A CUTE LITTLE SPRIG OF A THING.
HIS DAUGHTER, HUH?
HE BASICALLY MEETS EVERY DEADLINE NOW, TOO, SO I'M GRATEFUL FOR THAT.
SHE'S HIS ACTING SECRETARY. THANKS TO HER VOLUNTEERING, THERE'S NO MORE HAVING TO DECIPHER HIS GOD-AWFUL HANDWRITING.
I MEAN, NOT THAT I GET TO GO COLLECT DRAFTS IN PERSON NOWADAYS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SOUNDS GOOD"?
A CUTE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL? SOUNDS GOOD!
'KAY.
POP, I FIXED THE WEIRD SENTENCES AND TYPOS FOR YOU, SO DOUBLE-CHECK IT PLEASE.

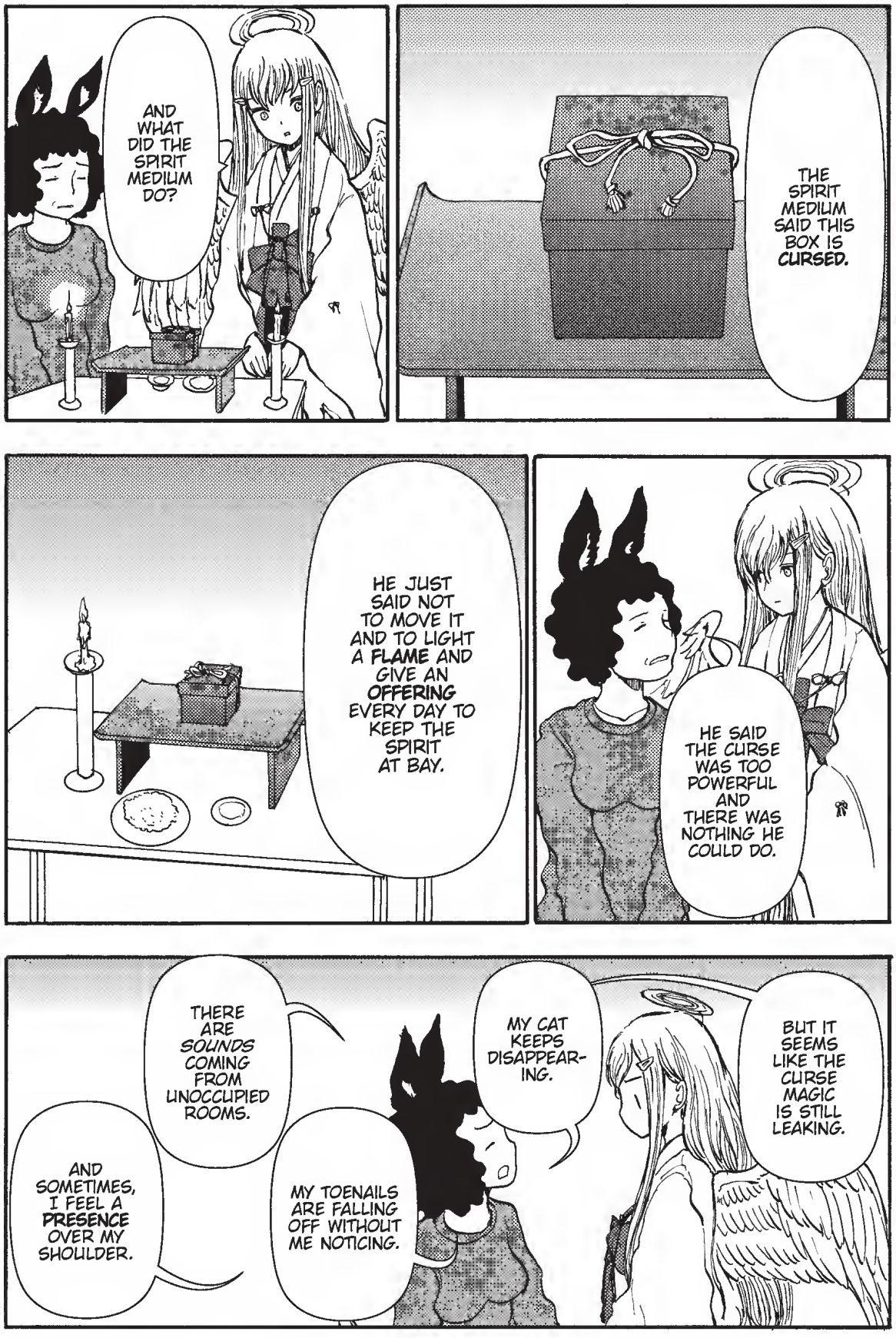

HE WOULDN'T LET ME DO AN INTERVIEW.
OH, AND ALSO...
DON'T YOU HAVE A QUOTE FROM THIS "PROFESSOR XX" HERE FROM THE UNIVERSITY?
BEEP
FWIP
OH, HE'S AT A LECTURE?
NO, I'M A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT.
YES. THE PROFESSOR'S WRITING LEFT A VERY DEEP IMPRESSION, AND SO...
HELLO, IS THIS THE OFFICE OF PROFESSOR XX? THIS IS...
Hey, what the...?


HERE'S YOUR QUOTE.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
YES, WELL, I'D LOVE TO MAKE HIS ACQUAINT-ANCE IN PERSON THE NEXT TIME.
Urk--!
CLAP
CLAP
I'LL BREW YA SOME COFFEE, NOW GET TO IT!
WHOA.

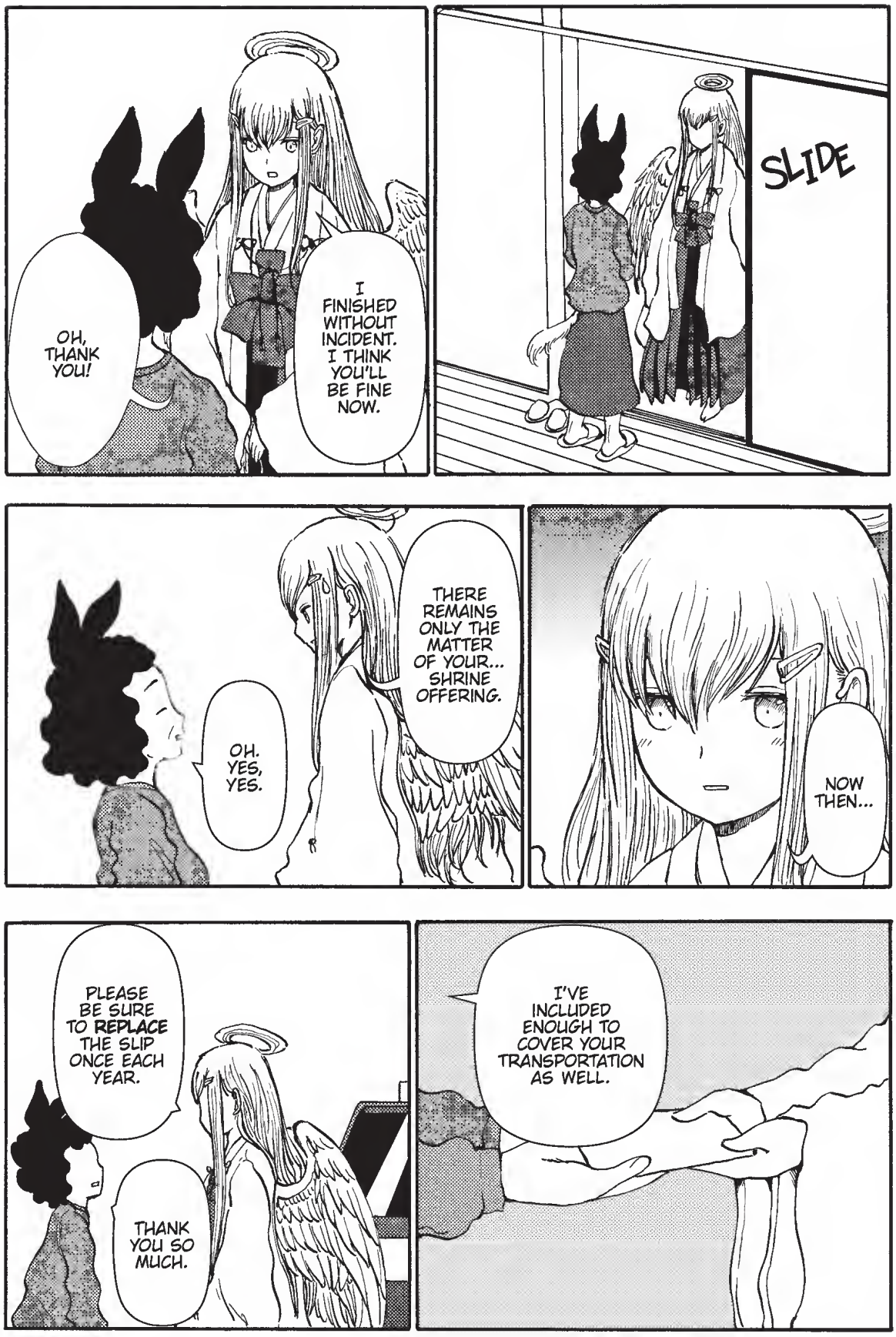

THAT'S THE CLASS PRESIDENT.
What is that? Cosplay?
HEYYY, MAKE WITH THE COFFEE.
YEAH, YEAH.
SEE SOMETHING INTERESTING OUT THERE?
MY FRIEND FROM SCHOOL'S OUT THERE DRESSED LIKE A **SHRINE MAIDEN.** SHE JUST WENT INTO OUR CRAZY OLD NEIGHBOR'S PLACE.
YOUR FRIEND RUNNING A **WITCH DOCTOR SCAM** OR SOMETHIN'?

WELL, I DON'T REALLY THINK THE PRESIDENT LOOKS THE TYPE.
ACTUALLY, I WANT YOU TO GET CLOSER. I WANT AN **INTERVIEW.**
GONNA TELL ME **NOT** TO HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS LIKE THAT?

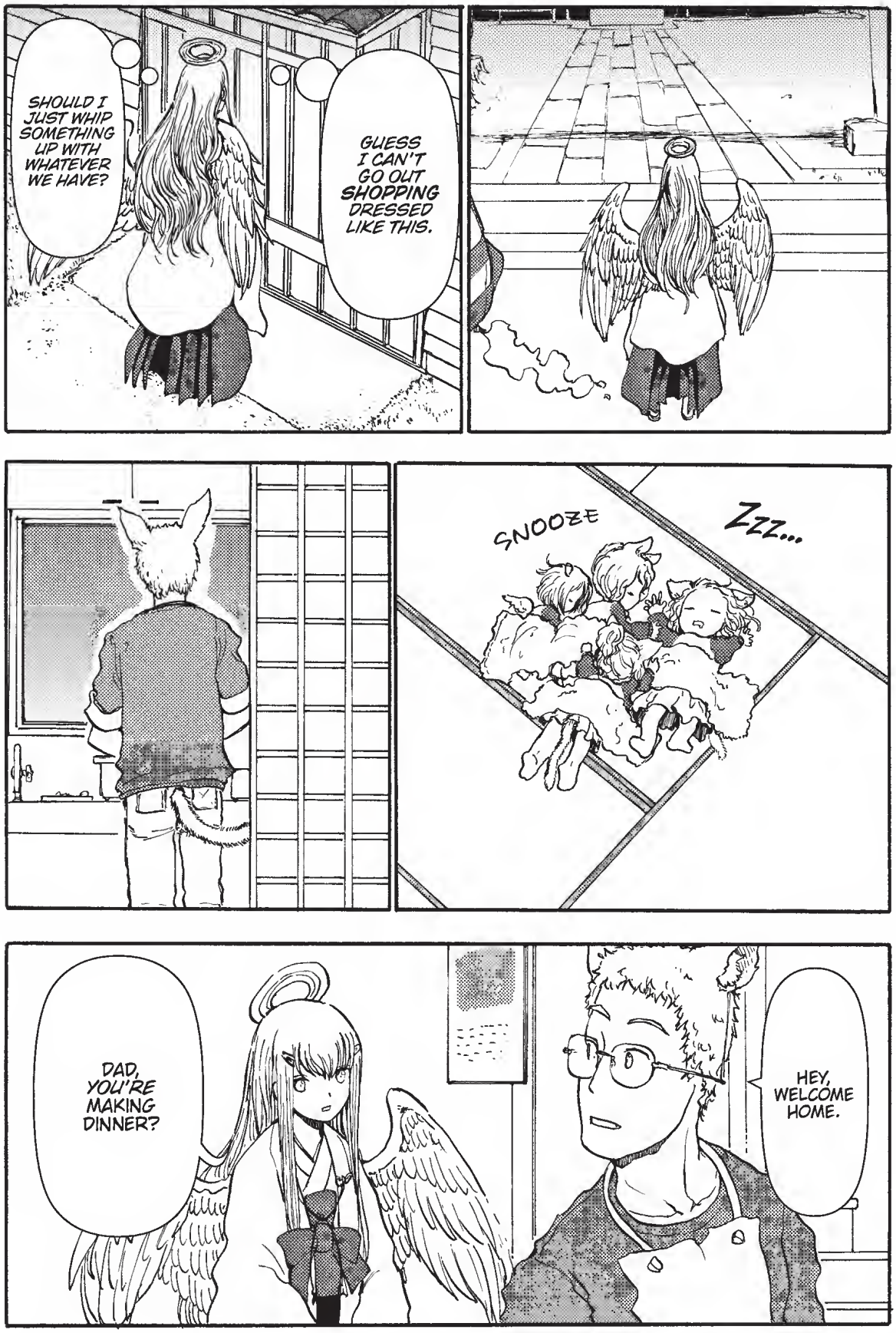

THIS HERE IS THE **BOX** IN QUESTION.

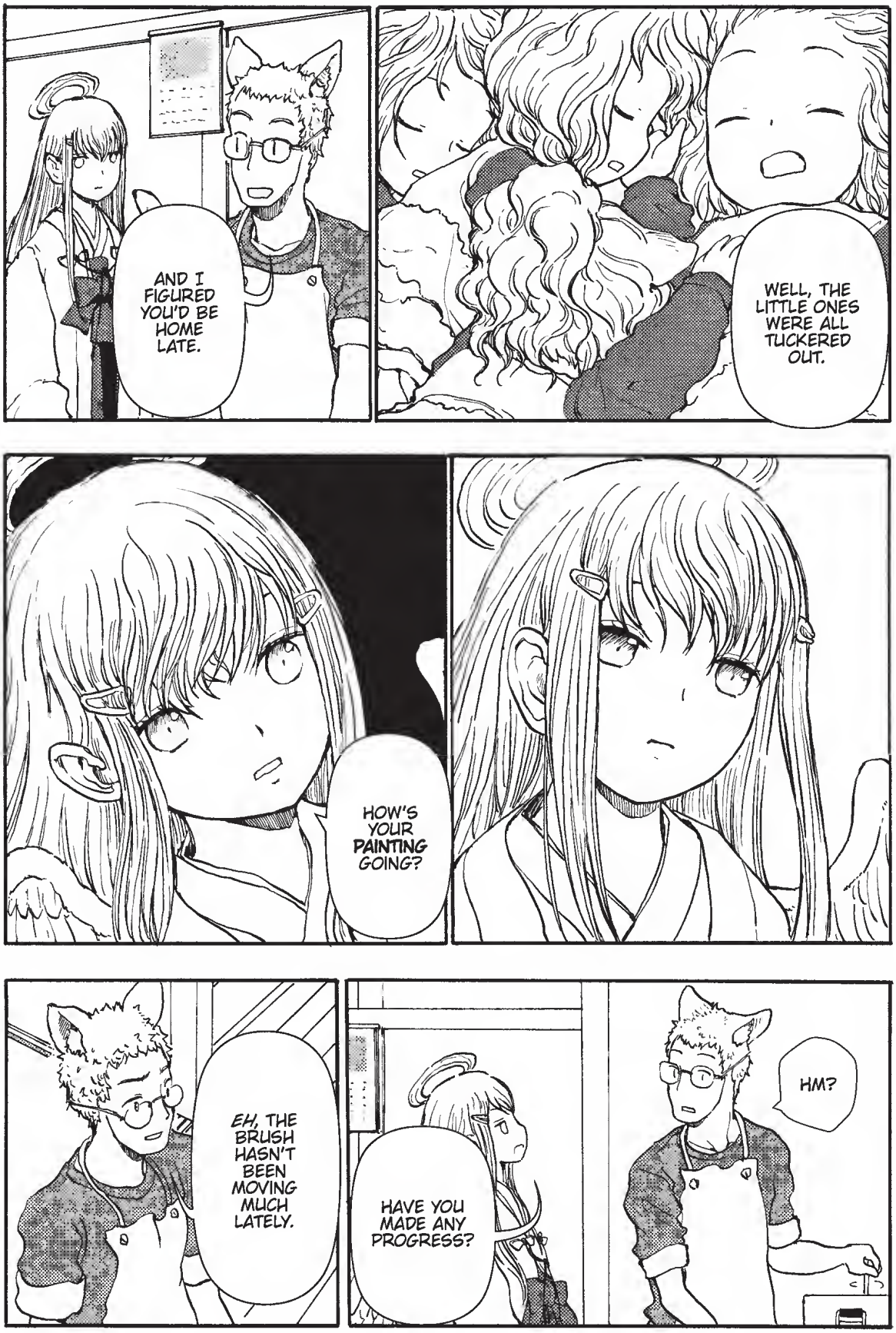

AND WHAT DID THE SPIRIT MEDIUM DO?
THE SPIRIT MEDIUM SAID THIS BOX IS CURSED.
HE JUST SAID NOT TO MOVE IT AND TO LIGHT A FLAME AND GIVE AN OFFERING EVERY DAY TO KEEP THE SPIRIT AT BAY.
HE SAID THE CURSE WAS TOO POWERFUL AND THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO.
THERE ARE SOUNDS COMING FROM UNOCCUPIED ROOMS.
MY CAT KEEPS DISAPPEAR-ING.
BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THE CURSE MAGIC IS STILL LEAKING.
AND SOMETIMES, I FEEL A PRESENCE OVER MY SHOULDER.
MY TOENAILS ARE FALLING OFF WITHOUT ME NOTICING.

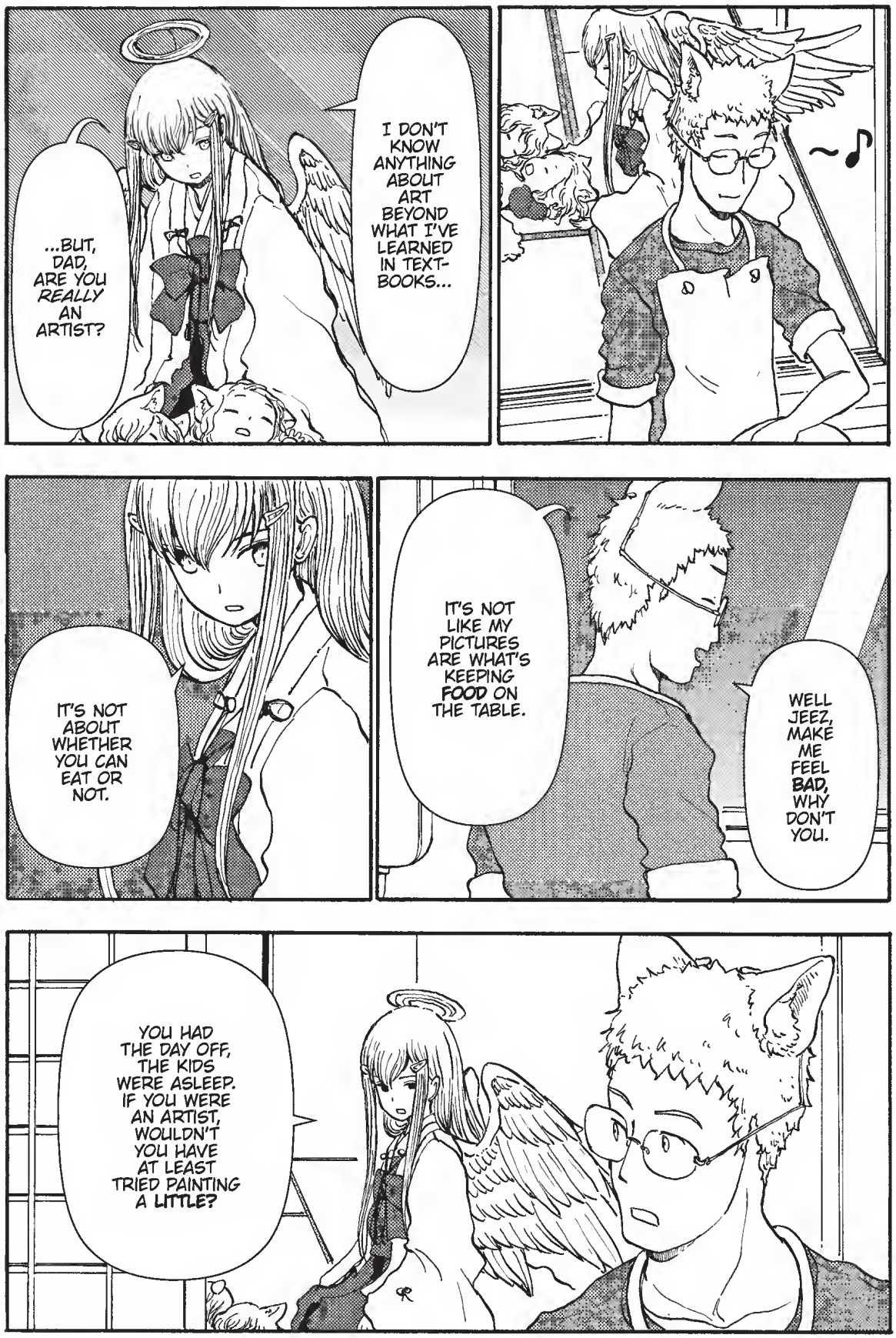
SLAP
PLEASE LEAVE THIS BOX IN OUR SHRINE'S POSSESSION.
UNDER-STOOD.
I WILL ALSO NOW PURGE THIS ROOM OF ANY LINGERING EVIL PRESENCE.
SHAKKA
SHAKKA
EVIL BEGONE! PURITY COME!
WONDER WHAT I SHOULD MAKE FOR DINNER TONIGHT...


I FINISHED WITHOUT INCIDENT. I THINK YOU'LL BE FINE NOW.
OH, THANK YOU!
SLIDE
THERE REMAINS ONLY THE MATTER OF YOUR... SHRINE OFFERING.
OH. YES, YES.
NOW THEN...
I'VE INCLUDED ENOUGH TO COVER YOUR TRANSPORTATION AS WELL.
PLEASE BE SURE TO **REPLACE** THE SLIP ONCE EACH YEAR.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.

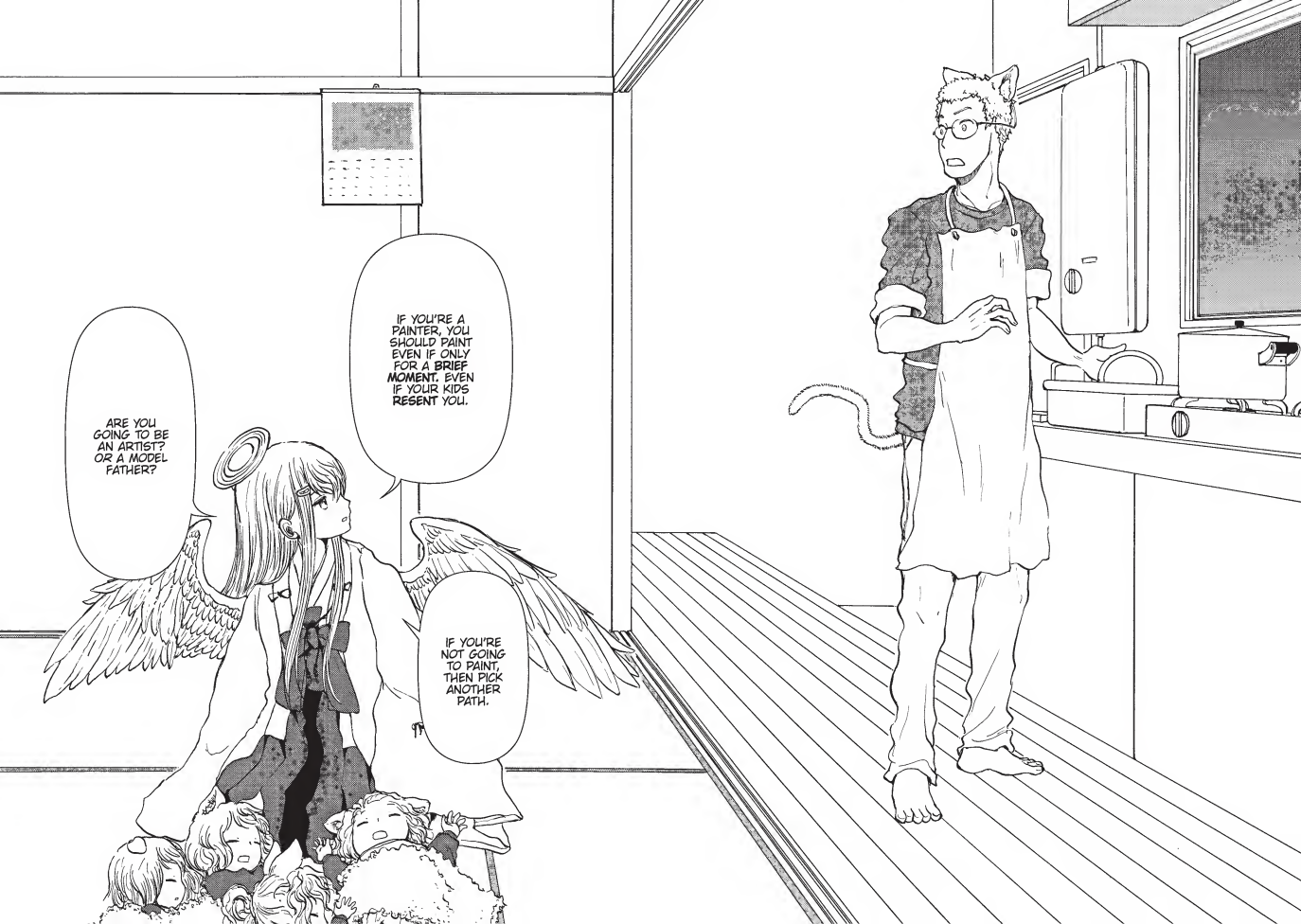
HE SAID YOU'RE GOOD TO GO.
PHEW! THAT'S ONE THING OUTTA THE WAY.
YES. OKAY THEN.
WE'LL TALK TO YOU AGAIN NEXT MONTH.
NO, DANG IT! BIG BROTHER'LL BE BACK SOON, AND WE'RE EATING HERE!
WHAAAT ?!
WELP, IT'S A LITTLE EARLY, BUT SHALL WE GO GRAB DINNER?
I'M GONNA GET STARTED ON DINNER!
YOU JUST WAIT HERE AND CRY TEARS OF JOY OVER THE HOME-COOKED MEAL YOU'RE ABOUT TO ENJOY.
DO YOU HAVE A BROTHER COMPLEX ?!
UGH, YOU'RE SUCH A PEST!
IT'S ALWAYS BIG BROTHER THIS, BIG BROTHER THAT WITH YOU, ISN'T IT?

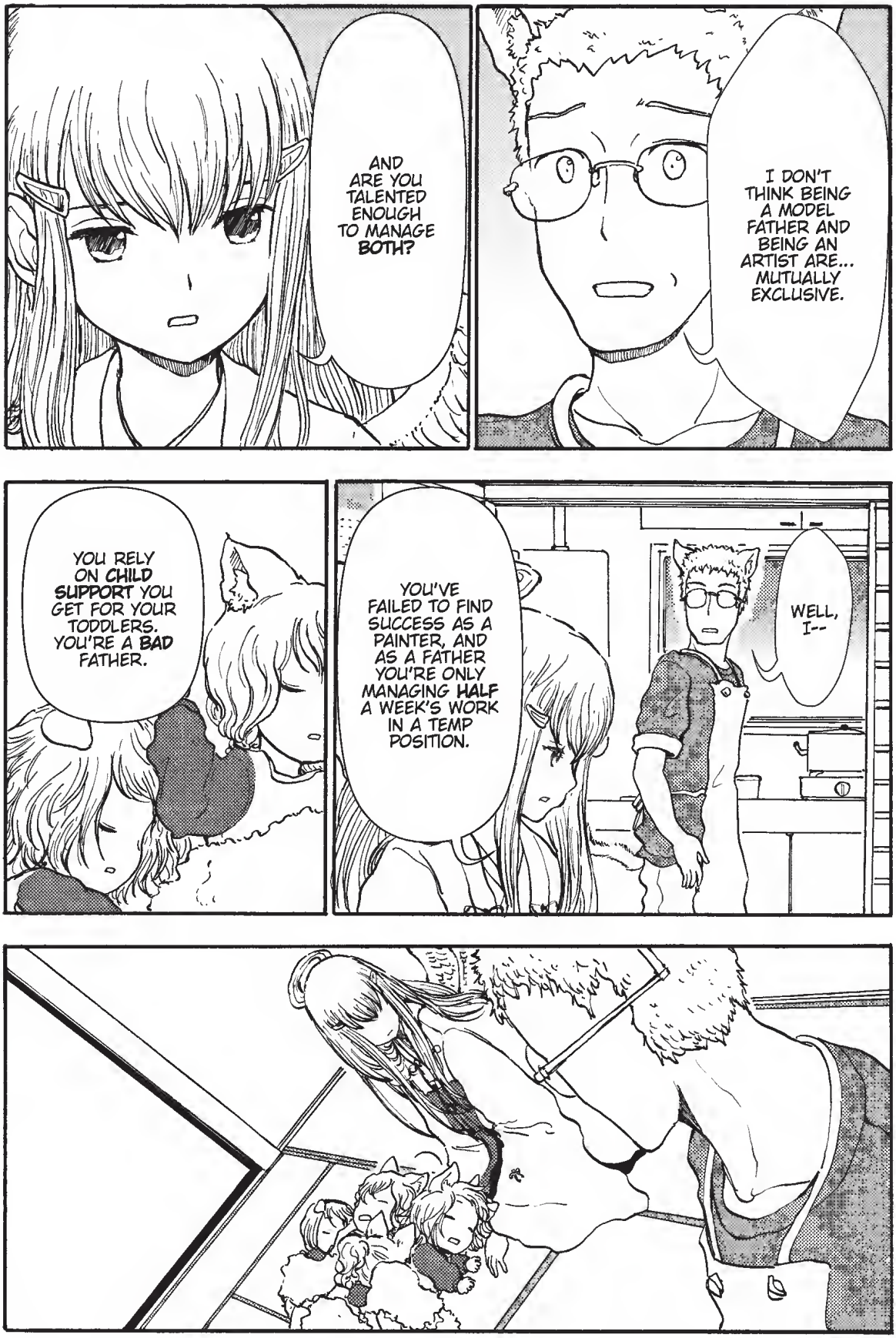

SHOULD I JUST WHIP SOMETHING UP WITH WHATEVER WE HAVE?
GUESS I CAN'T GO OUT SHOPPING DRESSED LIKE THIS.
SNOOZE
ZZZ...
DAD, YOU'RE MAKING DINNER?
HEY, WELCOME HOME.

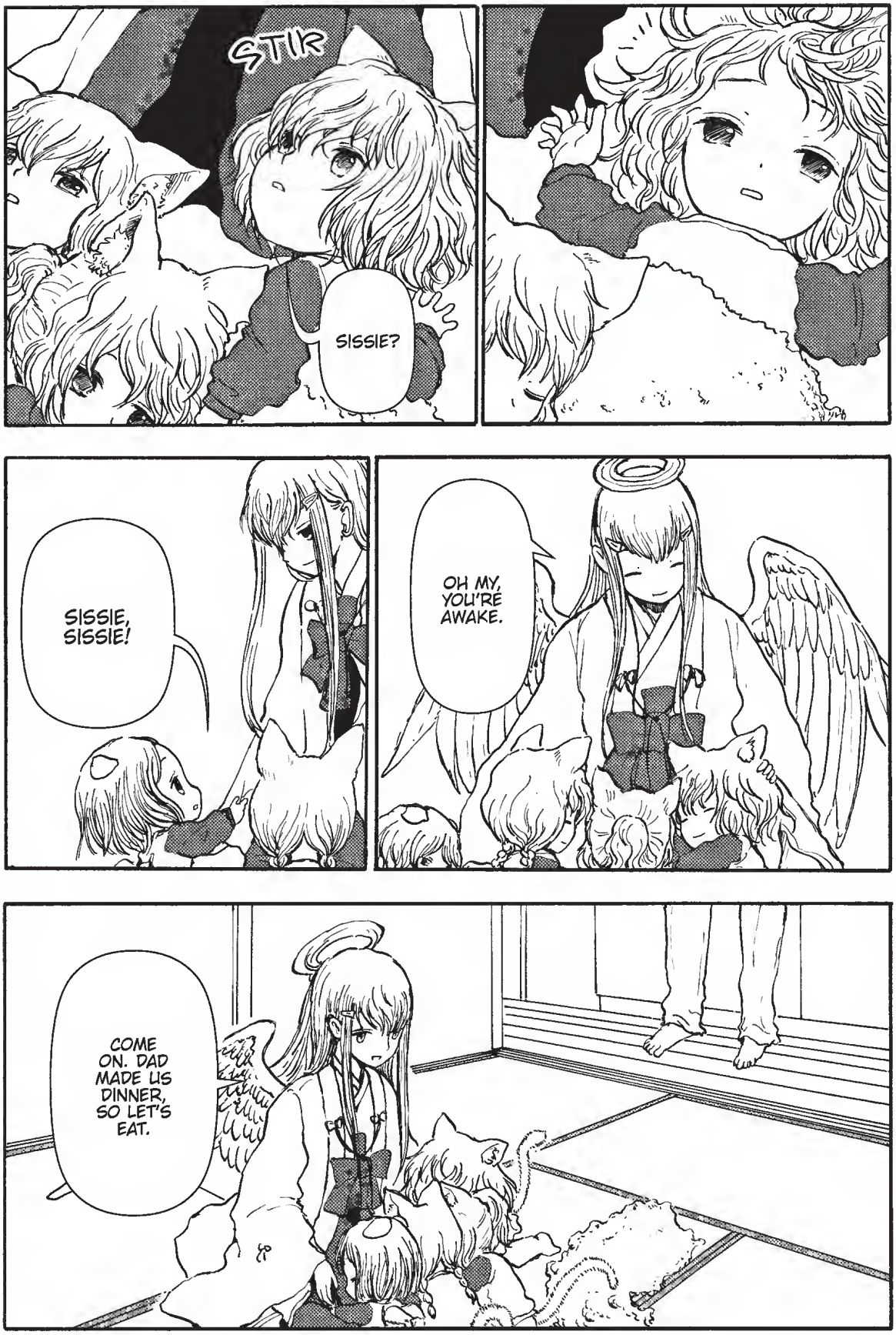

AND I FIGURED YOU'D BE HOME LATE.
WELL, THE LITTLE ONES WERE ALL TUCKERED OUT.
HOW'S YOUR PAINTING GOING?
EH, THE BRUSH HASN'T BEEN MOVING MUCH LATELY.
HAVE YOU MADE ANY PROGRESS?
HM?


I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ART BEYOND WHAT I'VE LEARNED IN TEXT-BOOKS...
...BUT, DAD, ARE YOU *REALLY* AN ARTIST?
~♪
WELL JEEZ, MAKE ME FEEL **BAD**, WHY DON'T YOU.
IT'S NOT LIKE MY PICTURES ARE WHAT'S KEEPING **FOOD** ON THE TABLE.
IT'S NOT ABOUT WHETHER YOU CAN EAT OR NOT.
YOU HAD THE DAY OFF, THE KIDS WERE ASLEEP. IF YOU WERE AN ARTIST, WOULDN'T YOU HAVE AT LEAST TRIED PAINTING A **LITTLE?**

BESIDES, GETTING DINNER READY MAKES YOUR LIFE EASIER, RIGHT?
MM, PAINTING ISN'T THE KIND OF THING YOU CAN JUST SLIP IN AT ODD MOMENTS.
AS A FATHER AND AS A HUMAN BEING.
THAT'S WELL PAST THE POINT OF CRUELTY.
AND MARX, HE LET HIS CHILDREN STARVE TO DEATH WHILE HE WROTE BOOKS.
IN AKUTAGAWA'S HELL SCREEN, AN ARTIST PAINTS THE IMAGE OF HIS OWN DAUGHTER BEING BURNED TO DEATH.
BUT IF YOU'RE A PAINTER, THEN YOU SHOULD PAINT, EVEN IF IT MEANS BEING RESENTED.
OF COURSE I WOULD.
WOULDN'T YOU RESENT ME IF I WENT THAT FAR?


ARE YOU GOING TO BE AN ARTIST? OR A MODEL FATHER?
IF YOU'RE A PAINTER, YOU SHOULD PAINT EVEN IF ONLY FOR A **BRIEF MOMENT.** EVEN IF YOUR KIDS **RESENT** YOU.
IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PAINT, THEN PICK ANOTHER PATH.


AND ARE YOU TALENTED ENOUGH TO MANAGE BOTH?
I DON'T THINK BEING A MODEL FATHER AND BEING AN ARTIST ARE... MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE.
YOU RELY ON CHILD SUPPORT YOU GET FOR YOUR TODDLERS. YOU'RE A BAD FATHER.
YOU'VE FAILED TO FIND SUCCESS AS A PAINTER, AND AS A FATHER YOU'RE ONLY MANAGING HALF A WEEK'S WORK IN A TEMP POSITION.
WELL, I--


STIR
SISSIE?
SISSIE, SISSIE!
OH MY, YOU'RE AWAKE.
COME ON. DAD MADE US DINNER, SO LET'S EAT.

Snore...
Snooore...

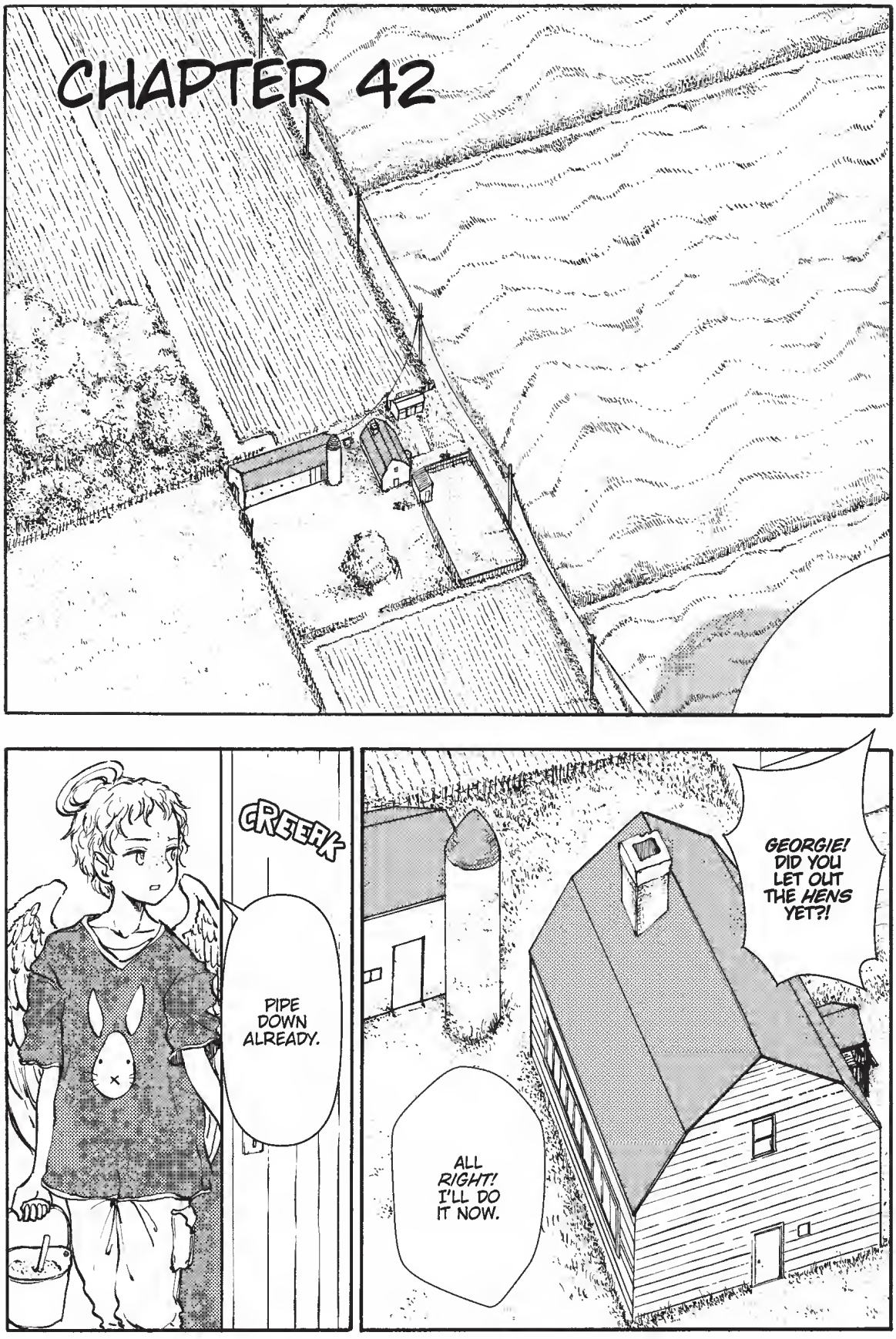
TELL THAT TO HIMENO.
ALL RIGHT, LET'S SWITCH SPOTS.
I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO CALL THIS CUTE IF SHE WERE STILL ABOUT SHINO-CHAN'S AGE.
But here she is, a high schooler...
Hyahh...
GET HOME SAFE, NOW.
OKAY, THAT'S IT FOR TODAY'S PRACTICE.
Thank you very much!

MITSUO-CHAN.
HI, MOM.
OH, I, ER, SURE THING.
THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS LOOKING AFTER THIS ONE, SENSEI.
YOU MUST BE A VERY GOOD TEACHER, SENSEI.
THIS ONE NEVER CONTINUES ANYTHING HE STARTS.
MAAAN, HOW DO PEOPLE EVER DECIDE WHAT TO DO AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?
Bye bye!

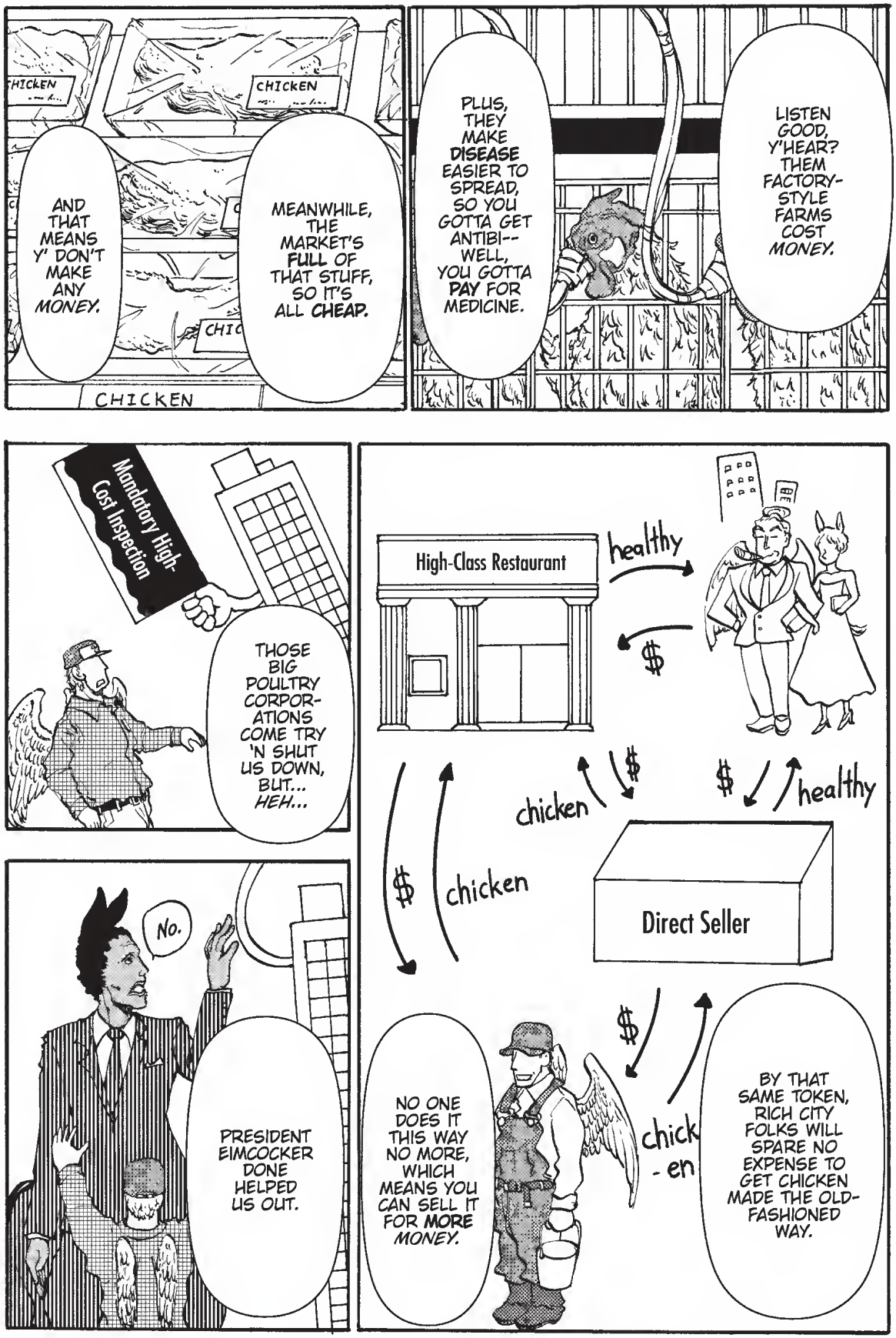
A CentaUr's Life

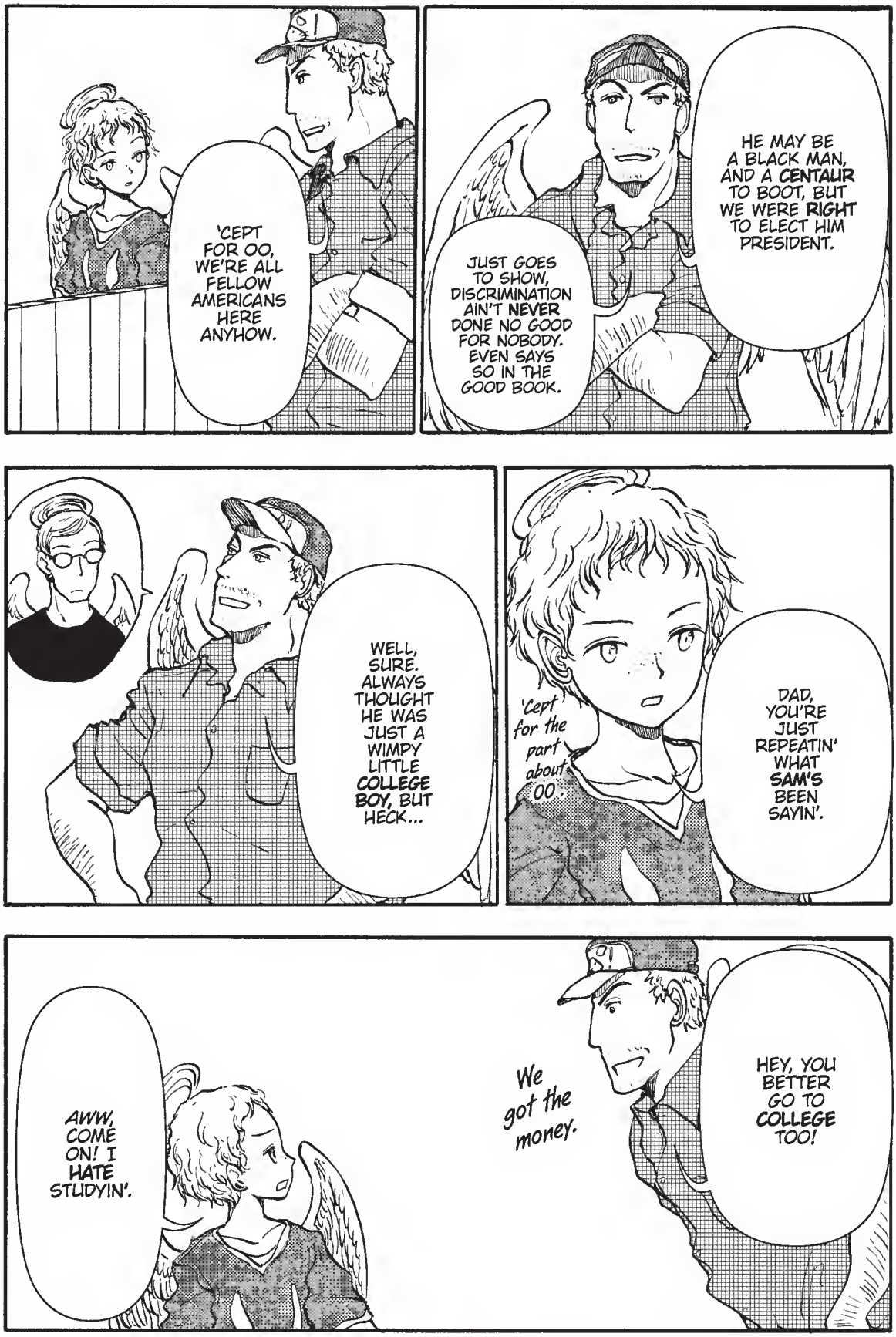
HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)
HOSOKAWA MASAMOTO (1466-1507)

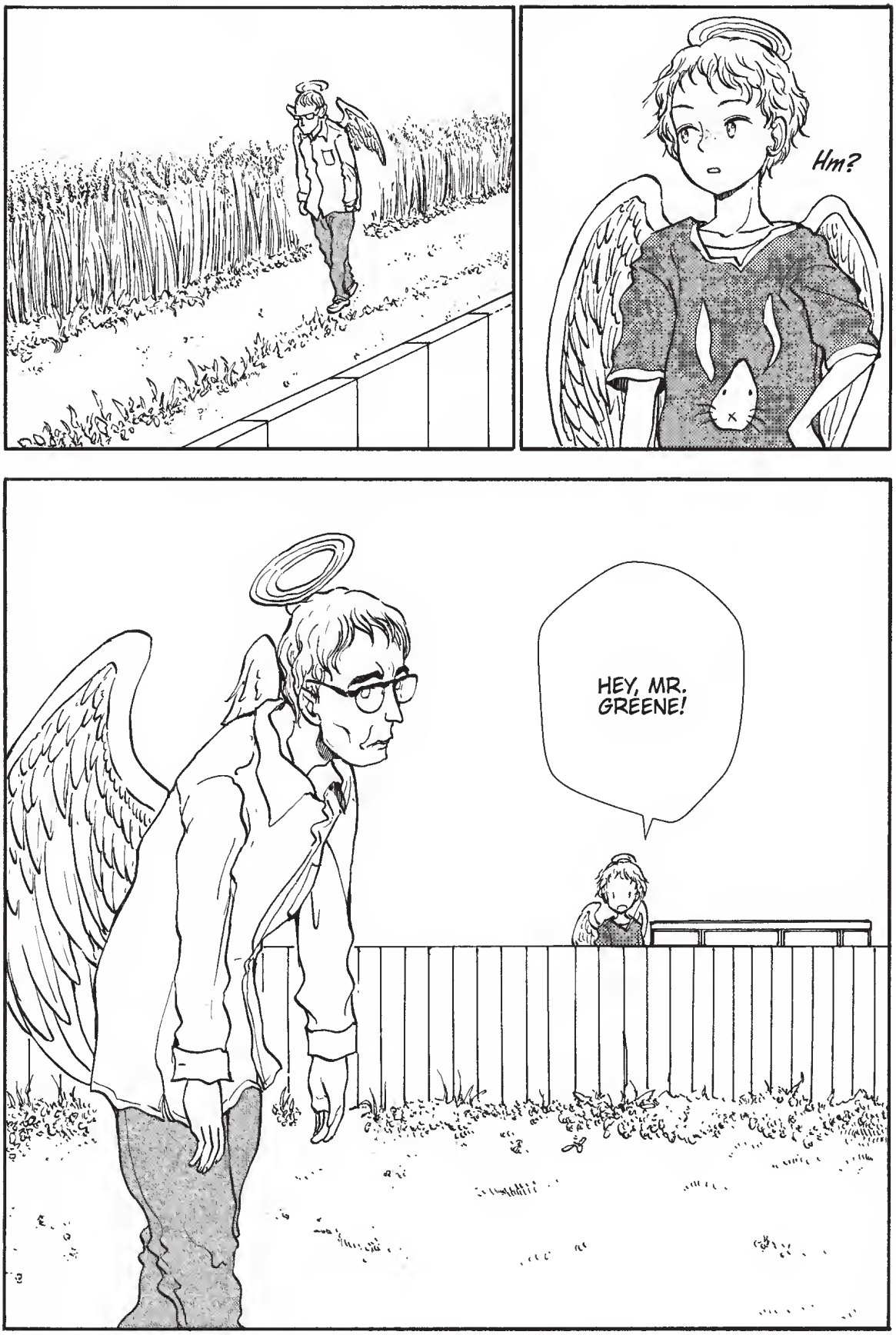
A SHOGUN OF THE MUROMACHI PERIOD, AND HEAD OF THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE HOSOKAWA HOUSE, ONE OF THE THREE *KANREI* HOUSES WHICH OVERSAW THE BAKUFU ADMINISTRATION. SON OF HOSOKAWA KATSUMOTO, COMMANDER OF THE EASTERN ARMY DURING THE ONIN WAR, MASAMOTO WAS ABLE TO GRASP SUPREME POWER WITHIN THE BAKUFU BY EXILING THE YOUNG SHOGUN ASHIKAGA YOSHIKI (LATER KNOWN AS ASHIKAGA YOSHITANE) IN THE COUP OF MEIO, AND APPOINTING ASHIKAGA YOSHITAKA AS SHOGUN. BY FURTHER SUPPRESSING THE FLEEING SUPPORTERS OF YOSHIKI, THE HOSOKAWA FAMILY WAS ABLE TO CONQUER A MASSIVE TERRITORY. MASAMOTO, HOWEVER, A KNOWN SORCERER, TOOK NO INTEREST IN WOMEN EVEN AT AGE FORTY, AND BECAME ABSORBED IN THE MYSTIC BUDDHIST PRACTICE OF *SHUGENDO*. THE CHILDLESS MASAMOTO ADOPTED THREE CHILDREN, A DECISION THAT, ALONG WITH HIS PROCLIVITY FOR SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCES, WOULD SPELL HIS DEMISE. MASAMOTO WAS ASSASSINATED IN THE ENSUING CONFLICT OVER WHO WOULD BE SUCCESSOR. HIS SORCERY OFFERED NO PRACTICAL AID. FOLLOWING HIS DEATH, THE HOUSE QUICKLY FELL AFTER EXTENSIVE INFIGHTING.


CHAPTER 42
CREEAK
PIPE DOWN ALREADY.
GEORGIE! DID YOU LET OUT THE HENS YET?!
ALL RIGHT! I'LL DO IT NOW.

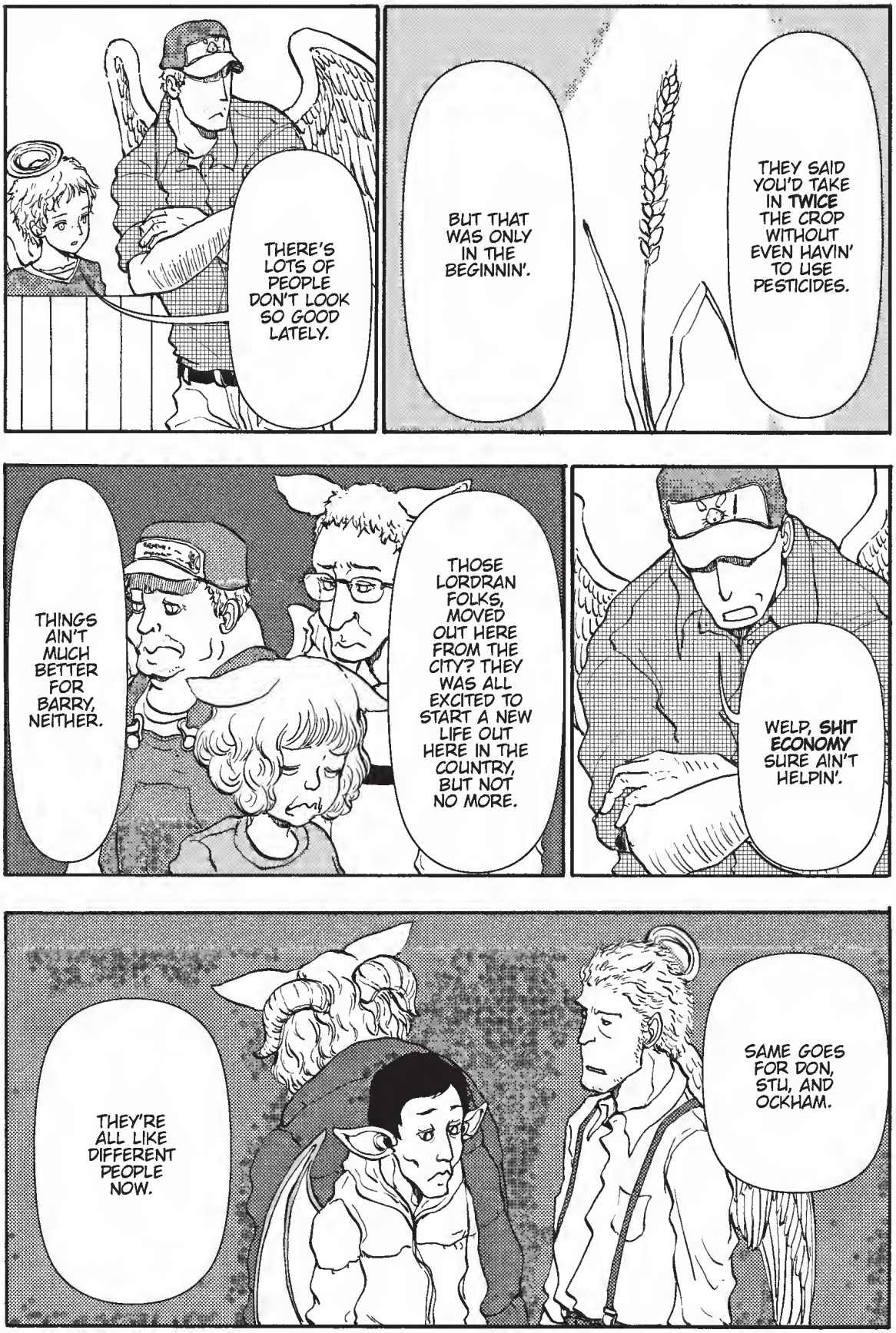
HERE, CHICK CHICK.
CLUCK CLUCK
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S 'BOUT TIME WE CHANGED HOW WE DO THINGS 'ROUND HERE?
DAAAD.
'COURSE. I'M ONLY IN GRADE SCHOOL.
YOU GOT LOTS T' LEARN, BUDDY BOY.
THE HEN-HOUSE AT MR. WRIGHT'S PLACE IS ALL AUTOMATED NOW.
Artist's Rendering

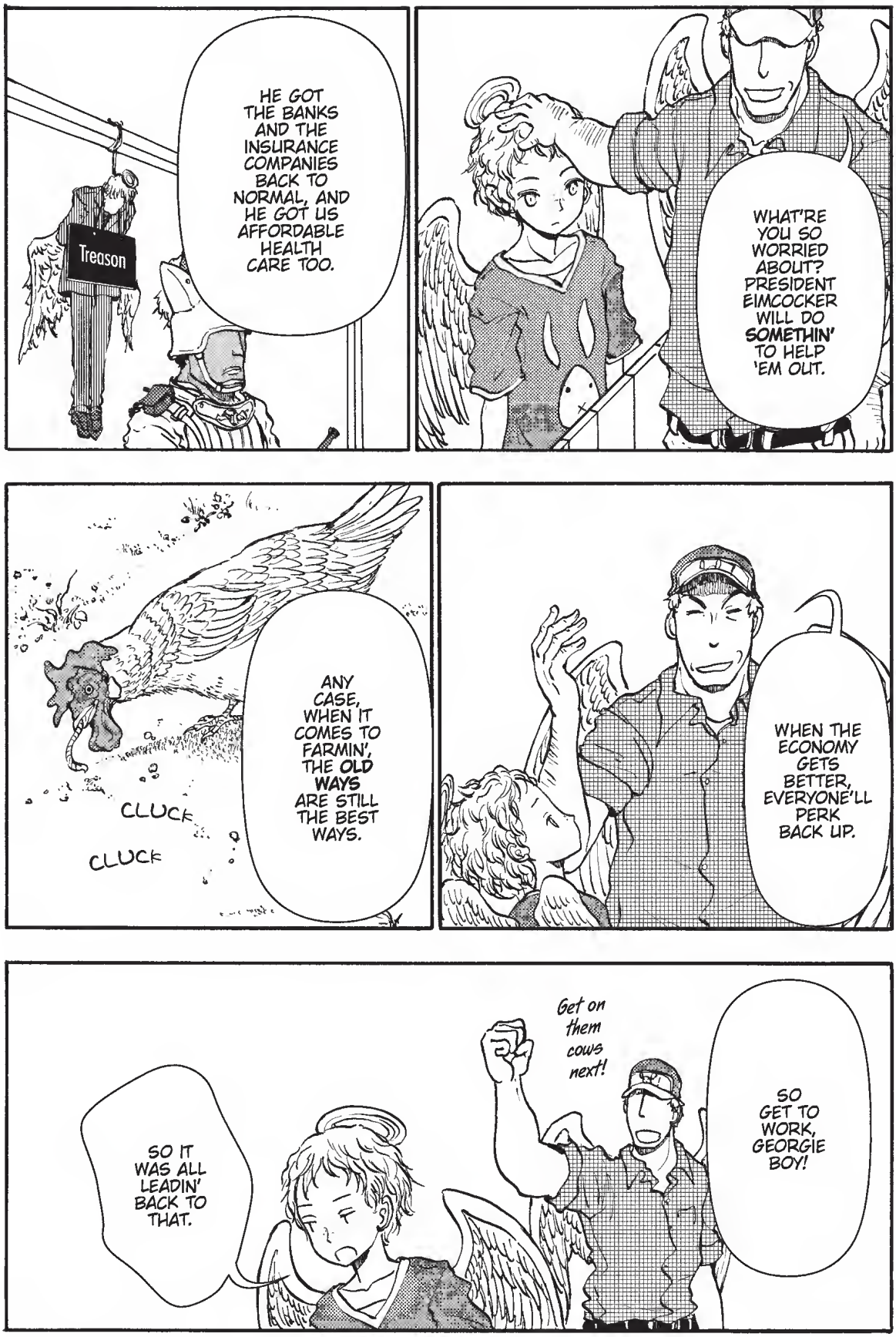

CHICKEN
CHICKEN
CHICKEN
AND THAT MEANS Y' DON'T MAKE ANY MONEY.
MEANWHILE, THE MARKET'S FULL OF THAT STUFF, SO IT'S ALL CHEAP.
PLUS, THEY MAKE DISEASE EASIER TO SPREAD, SO YOU GOTTA GET ANTIBI-- WELL, YOU GOTTA PAY FOR MEDICINE.
LISTEN GOOD, Y'HEAR? THEM FACTORY-STYLE FARMS COST MONEY.
Mandatory High-Cost Inspection
THOSE BIG POULTRY CORPOR-ATIONS COME TRY 'N SHUT US DOWN, BUT... HEH...
High-Class Restaurant
healthy
$
chicken
$
$
healthy
$
chicken
Direct Seller
No.
PRESIDENT EIMCOCKER DONE HELPED US OUT.
NO ONE DOES IT THIS WAY NO MORE, WHICH MEANS YOU CAN SELL IT FOR MORE MONEY.
$
chick-en
BY THAT SAME TOKEN, RICH CITY FOLKS WILL SPARE NO EXPENSE TO GET CHICKEN MADE THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY.


'CEPT FOR OO, WE'RE ALL FELLOW AMERICANS HERE ANYHOW.
JUST GOES TO SHOW, DISCRIMINATION AIN'T NEVER DONE NO GOOD FOR NOBODY. EVEN SAYS SO IN THE GOOD BOOK.
HE MAY BE A BLACK MAN, AND A CENTAUR TO BOOT, BUT WE WERE RIGHT TO ELECT HIM PRESIDENT.
WELL, SURE. ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS JUST A WIMPY LITTLE COLLEGE BOY, BUT HECK...
'Cept for the part about OO.
DAD, YOU'RE JUST REPEATIN' WHAT SAM'S BEEN SAYIN'.
AWW, COME ON! I HATE STUDYIN'.
We got the money.
HEY, YOU BETTER GO TO COLLEGE TOO!

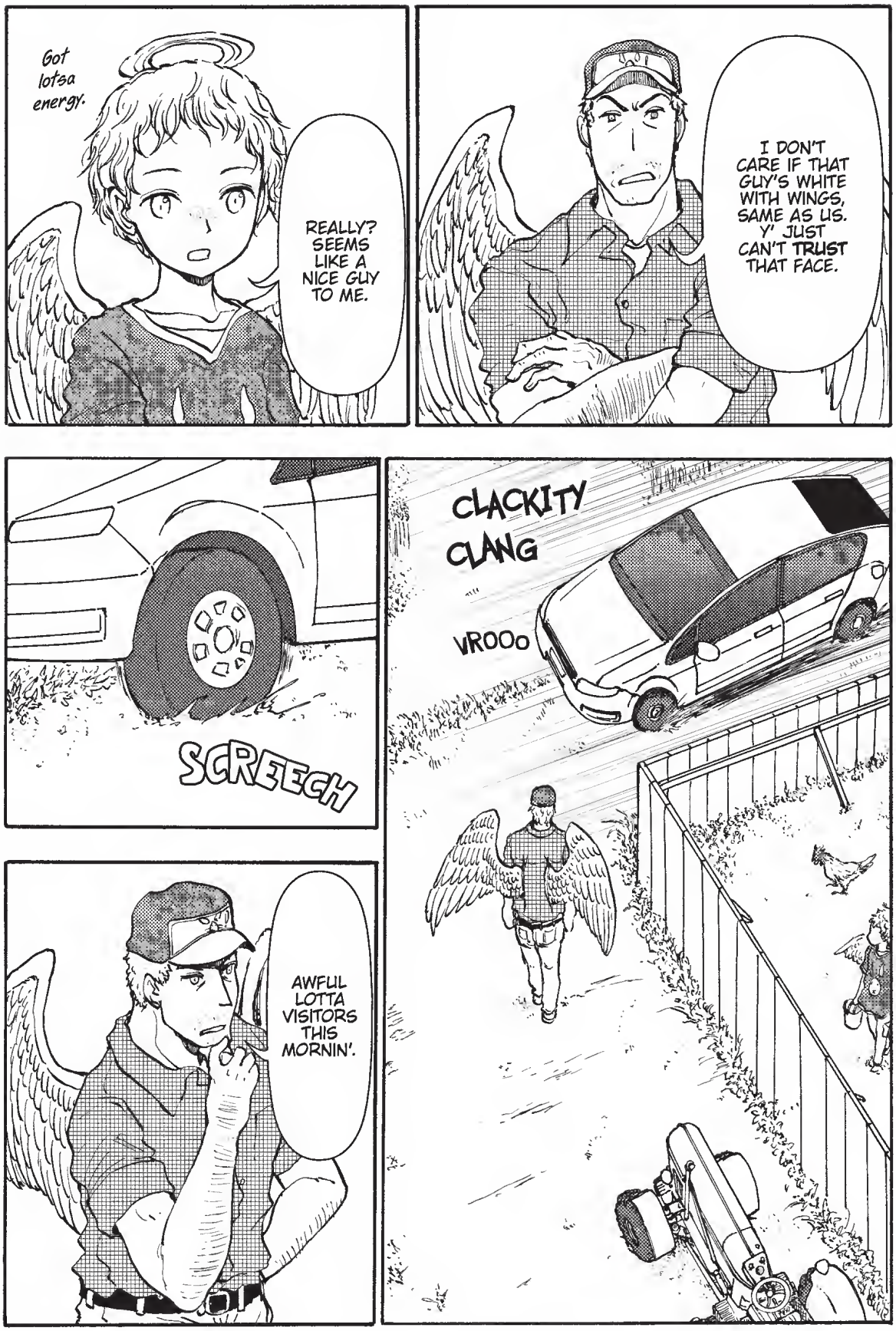

Hm?
HEY, MR. GREENE!

MORNIN', ED.
HEY, GEORGIE.
WHAT'S WITH GRAHAM?
HE AIN'T LOOKED TOO GOOD FOR A WHILE NOW.
GUESS THEM GMO CROPS AIN'T DOIN' HIM NO GOOD.


THERE'S LOTS OF PEOPLE DON'T LOOK SO GOOD LATELY.
BUT THAT WAS ONLY IN THE BEGINNIN'.
THEY SAID YOU'D TAKE IN **TWICE** THE CROP WITHOUT EVEN HAVIN' TO USE PESTICIDES.
THINGS AIN'T MUCH BETTER FOR BARRY, NEITHER.
THOSE LORDRAN FOLKS, MOVED OUT HERE FROM THE CITY? THEY WAS ALL EXCITED TO START A NEW LIFE OUT HERE IN THE COUNTRY, BUT NOT NO MORE.
WELP, **SHIT ECONOMY** SURE AIN'T HELPIN'.
THEY'RE ALL LIKE DIFFERENT PEOPLE NOW.
SAME GOES FOR DON, STU, AND OCKHAM.


HE GOT THE BANKS AND THE INSURANCE COMPANIES BACK TO NORMAL, AND HE GOT US AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE TOO.
Treason
WHAT'RE YOU SO WORRIED ABOUT? PRESIDENT EIMCOCKER WILL DO SOMETHIN' TO HELP 'EM OUT.
ANY CASE, WHEN IT COMES TO FARMIN', THE OLD WAYS ARE STILL THE BEST WAYS.
CLUCK
CLUCK
WHEN THE ECONOMY GETS BETTER, EVERYONE'LL PERK BACK UP.
SO IT WAS ALL LEADIN' BACK TO THAT.
Get on them cows next!
SO GET TO WORK, GEORGIE BOY!

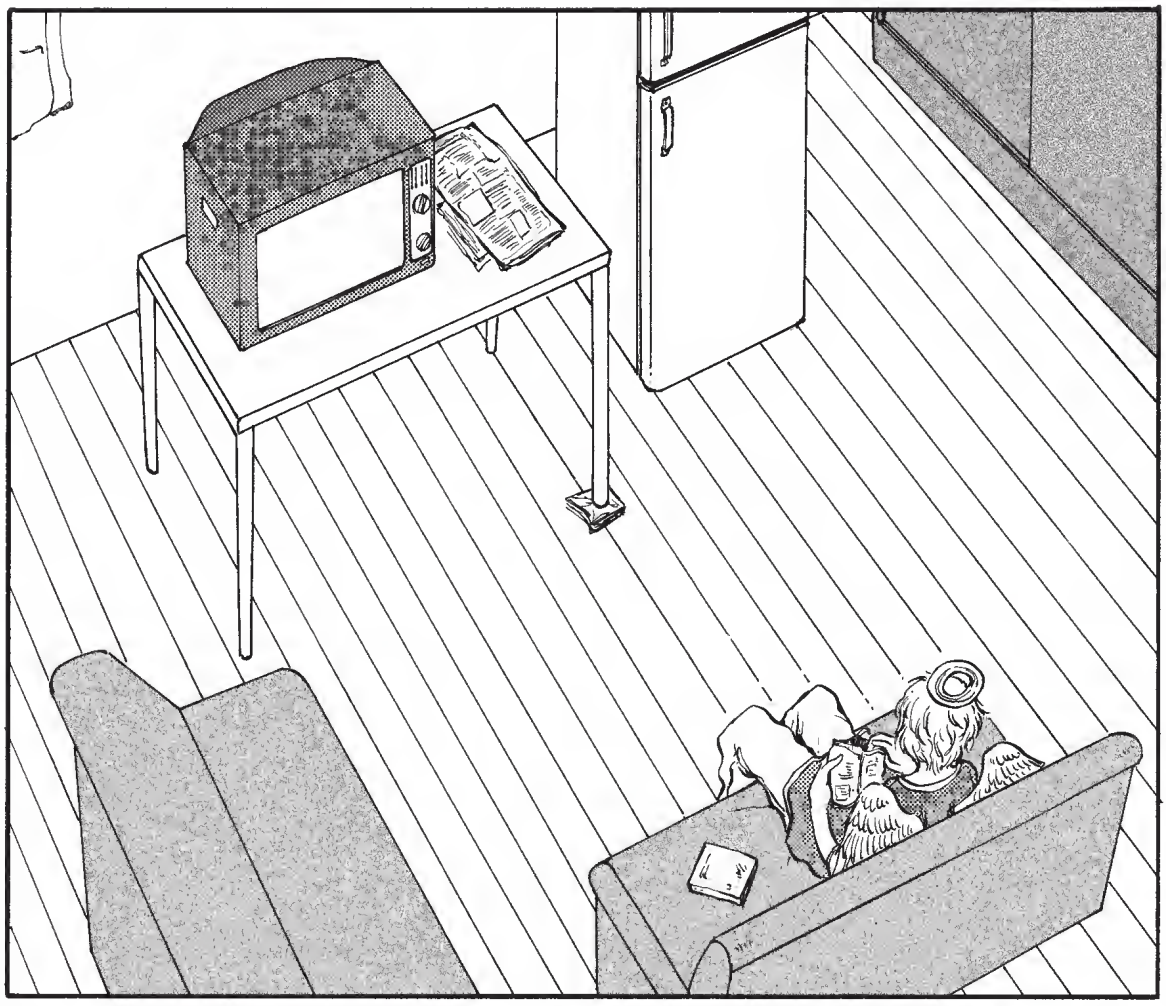
OH, HEY THERE, MR. POEHLER.
MORNIN', GEORGIE!
MORNIN', ED!
H'LO.
YOU'RE ALWAYS FULL O' VIM 'N VIGOR! GOOD FER YOU!
SAME OL' CREEPY GRIN, AS USUAL.
WELP, SEE YA!

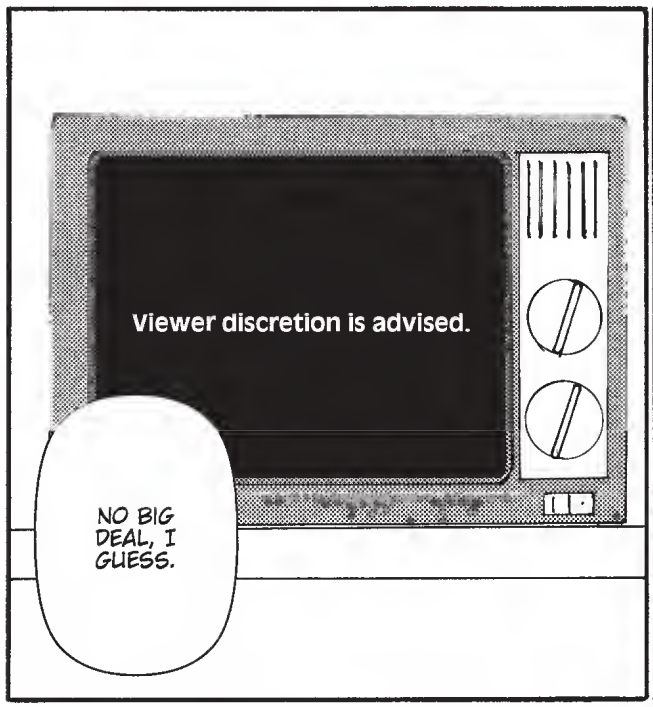

Got lotsa energy.
REALLY? SEEMS LIKE A NICE GUY TO ME.
I DON'T CARE IF THAT GUY'S WHITE WITH WINGS, SAME AS US. Y' JUST CAN'T TRUST THAT FACE.
SCREECH
CLACKITY CLANG
VROOo
AWFUL LOTTA VISITORS THIS MORNIN'.

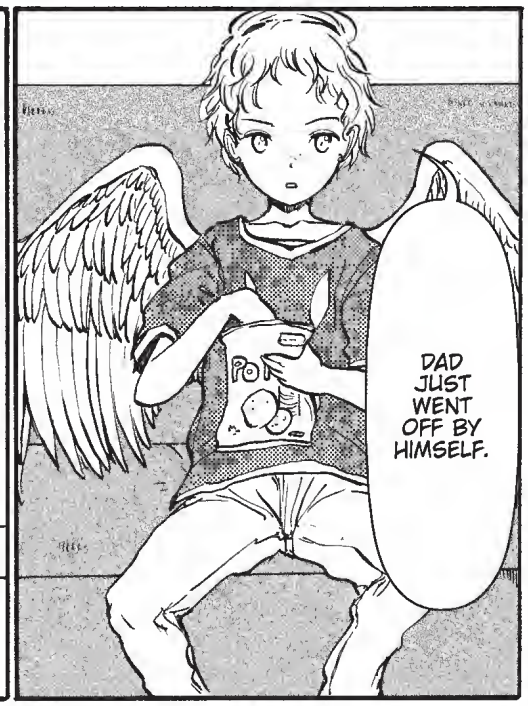
PLEASE, DON'T MAKE SUCH A SOUR FACE. TONTHAMON FARMING CORP. IS A FRIEND TO EVERYONE.
WELL, GOOD MORNING THERE, MR. SHORT-STREET.
I GOTTA BUY NEW SEEDS FROM YOUR COMPANY EVERY YEAR, THEN YOU'RE GONNA TELL ME I CAN'T USE ANY COMPANY'S CHEMICALS BUT YOURS, AND, IF I BREAK THE RULES, YOU'LL BLEED ME DRY WITH PENALTY CHARGES. I'VE HEARD WHAT YOU DO.
YOU'RE GONNA TRY AND GET ME TO SIGN SOME DICTIONARY-SIZED CONTRACT WRITTEN UP BY SOME LAWYER. THEN YOU'RE GONNA TELL ME...
WHUD
LET'S GET ONE THING STRAIGHT RIGHT NOW: THE ANSWER IS NO.
GEORGIE! GET MY GUN! THE BIG ONE!!
WHY, EVEN YOUR NEIGHBORS--
EVEN SO, YOU'LL SEE SUCH AN INCREASE IN YOUR HARVEST THAT IT'LL BALANCE OUT WELL IN YOUR FAVOR IN THE END.

AND THAT MAKES YOU AN **UNLAWFUL INTRUDER.**
JUST SO Y'KNOW? THAT SPOT YOU'RE STANDING ON RIGHT NOW IS **PRIVATE PROPERTY.**
E'ryone just passes on through, but this is a private drive.
PLEASE, WON'T YOU AT LEAST **COME** TO OUR INFORMATIONAL SESSION?
NOW, NOW, I'M NOT TRYING TO FORCE YOU TO DO ANY-THING...
AND IF I EAT IT, I'VE ENTERED SOME **CONTRACT,** RIGHT?!
Y...YES, YES. WE'RE HOLDING IT AT A NEARBY HOTEL. IT'S **FREE** OF CHARGE AND COMES WITH LUNCH AND A BEER.
"INFOR-MATIONAL SES-SION"?!

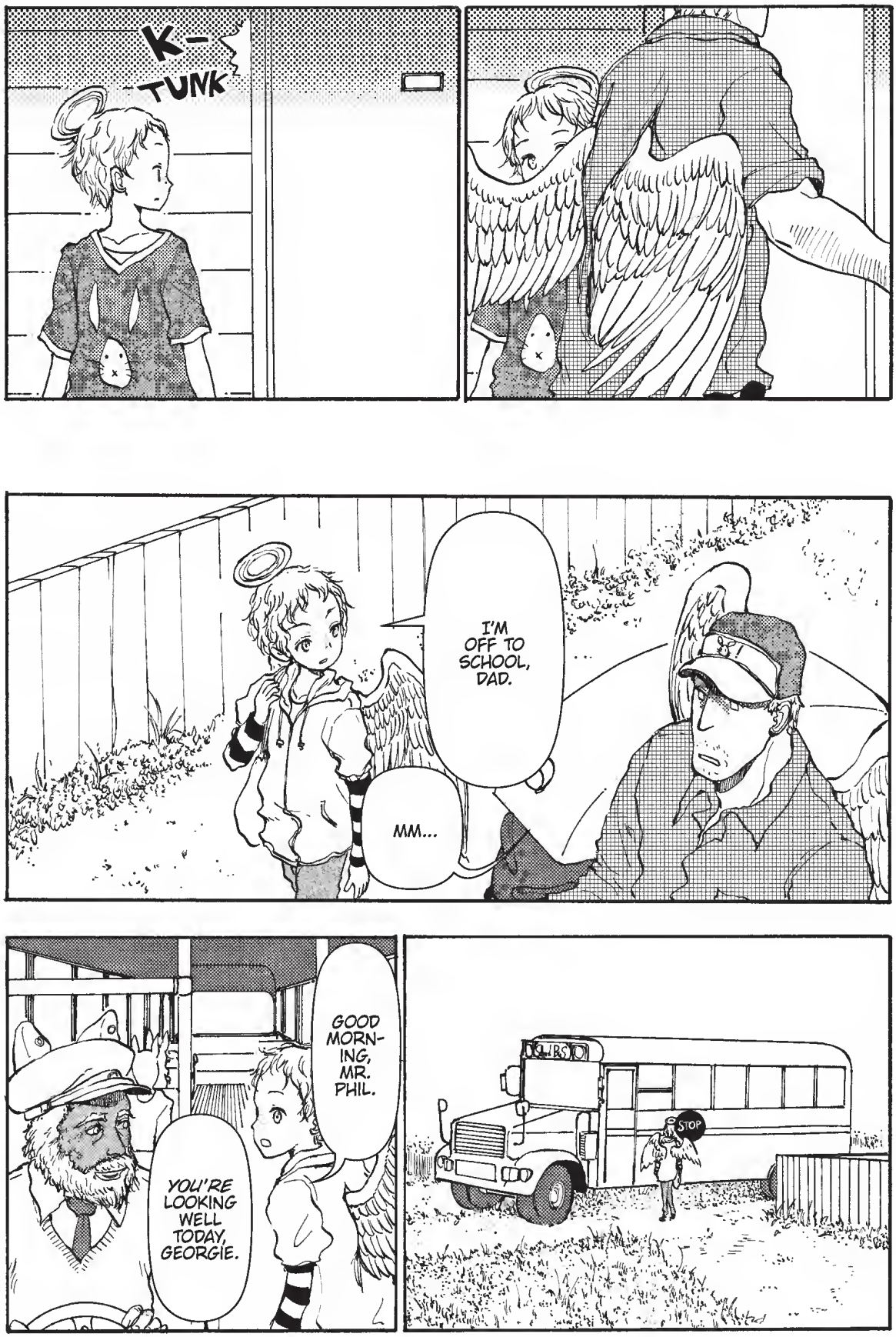
TO BE HONEST, I'M EVALUATED ON HOW MANY PEOPLE I CAN GATHER.
YOU COULD CONSIDER IT AN **APOLOGY** FOR MY BEING SO PERSISTENT.
BY NO MEANS! PLEASE THINK OF IT AS **OUR TREAT.**
FWUMP
HONEST. PLEASE EAT AND DRINK TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT!
WE'VE GOT **TOP-QUALITY** STEAK AND WINE, TOO.
SO, I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU WOULD HELP ME OUT.
ALL RIGHT.
HURRY UP AND TAKE CARE O' THEM **COWS** OR YOU'LL MISS YOUR SCHOOL BUS.
GEOR-GIE!
AND YOU, GEORGIE. WE'VE GOT LOTS OF **SWEETS** FOR YOU, SON.

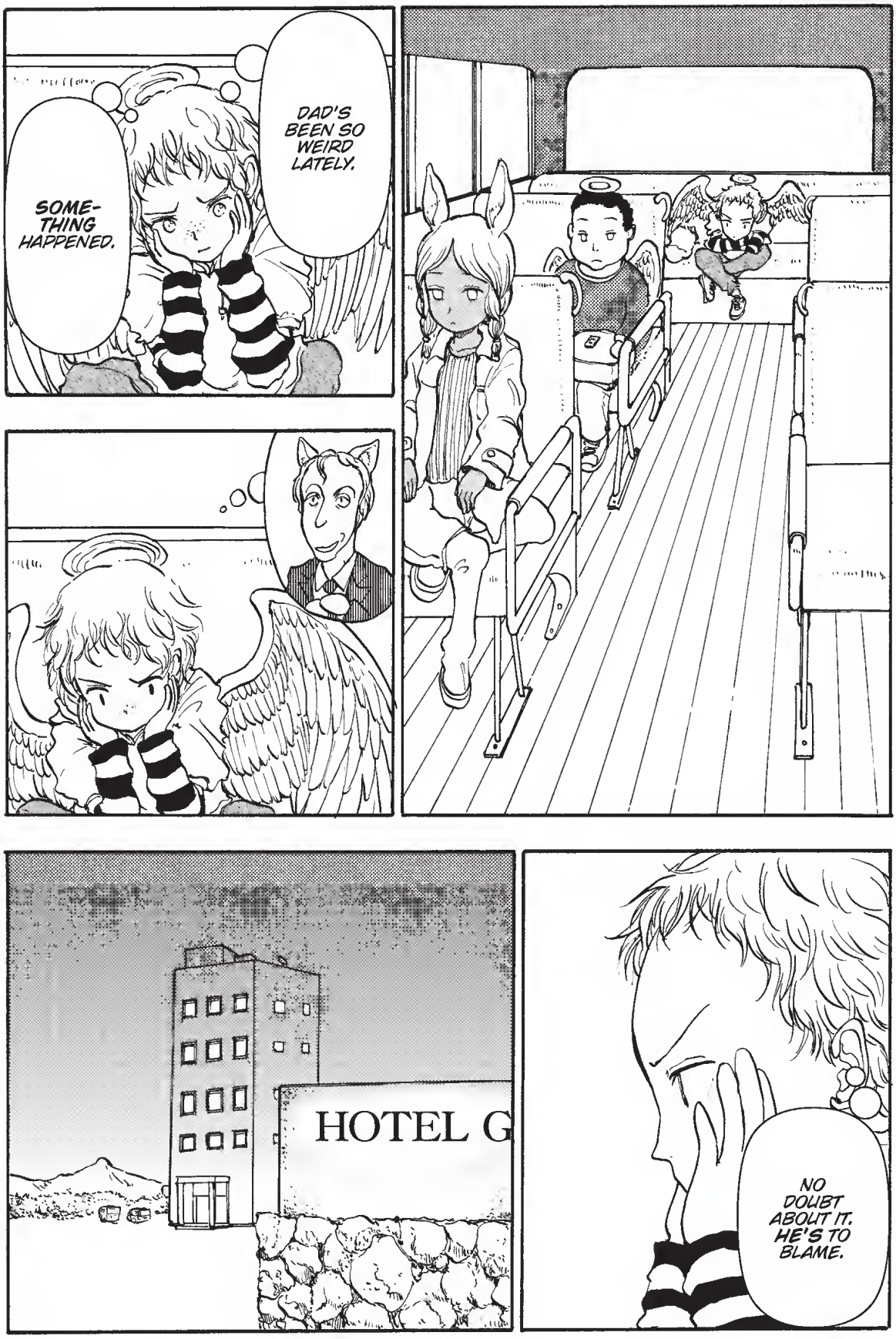



Viewer discretion is advised.
NO BIG DEAL, I GUESS.

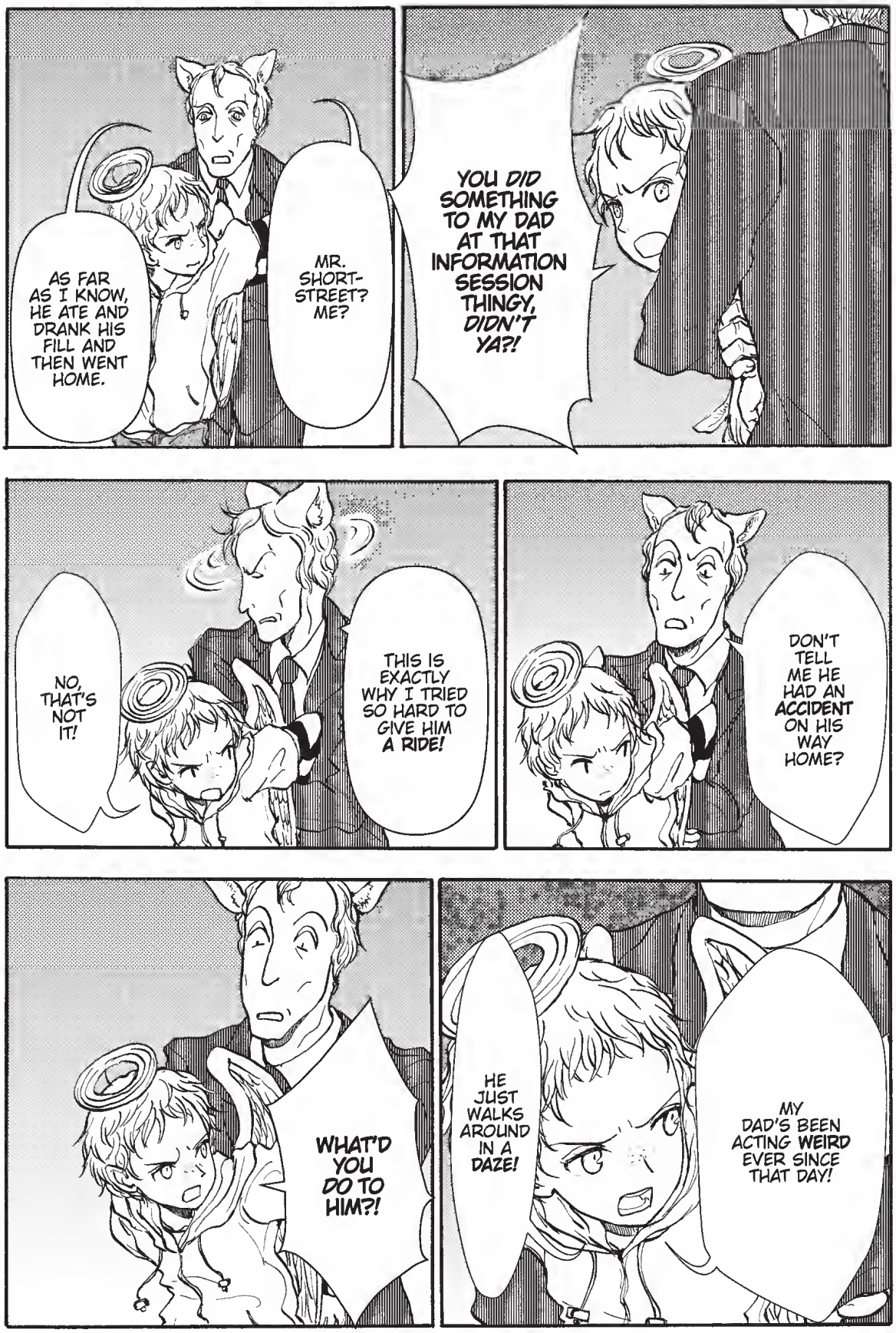

DAD JUST WENT OFF BY HIMSELF.

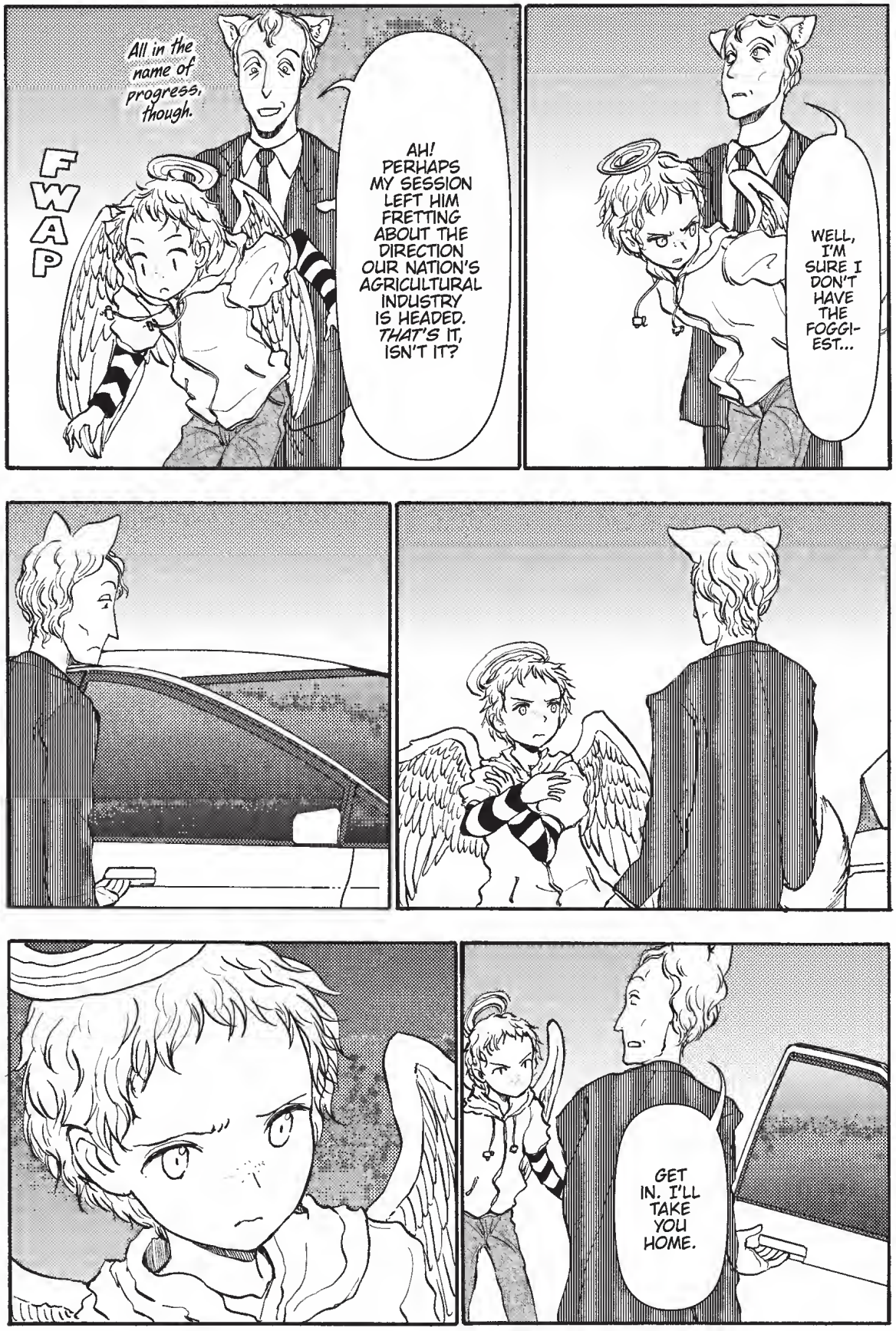
K-
TUNK
POTEL
OH, DAD, IT'S YOU.
YOU COULD AT LEAST LET ME KNOW YOU'RE HOME, Y'KN--

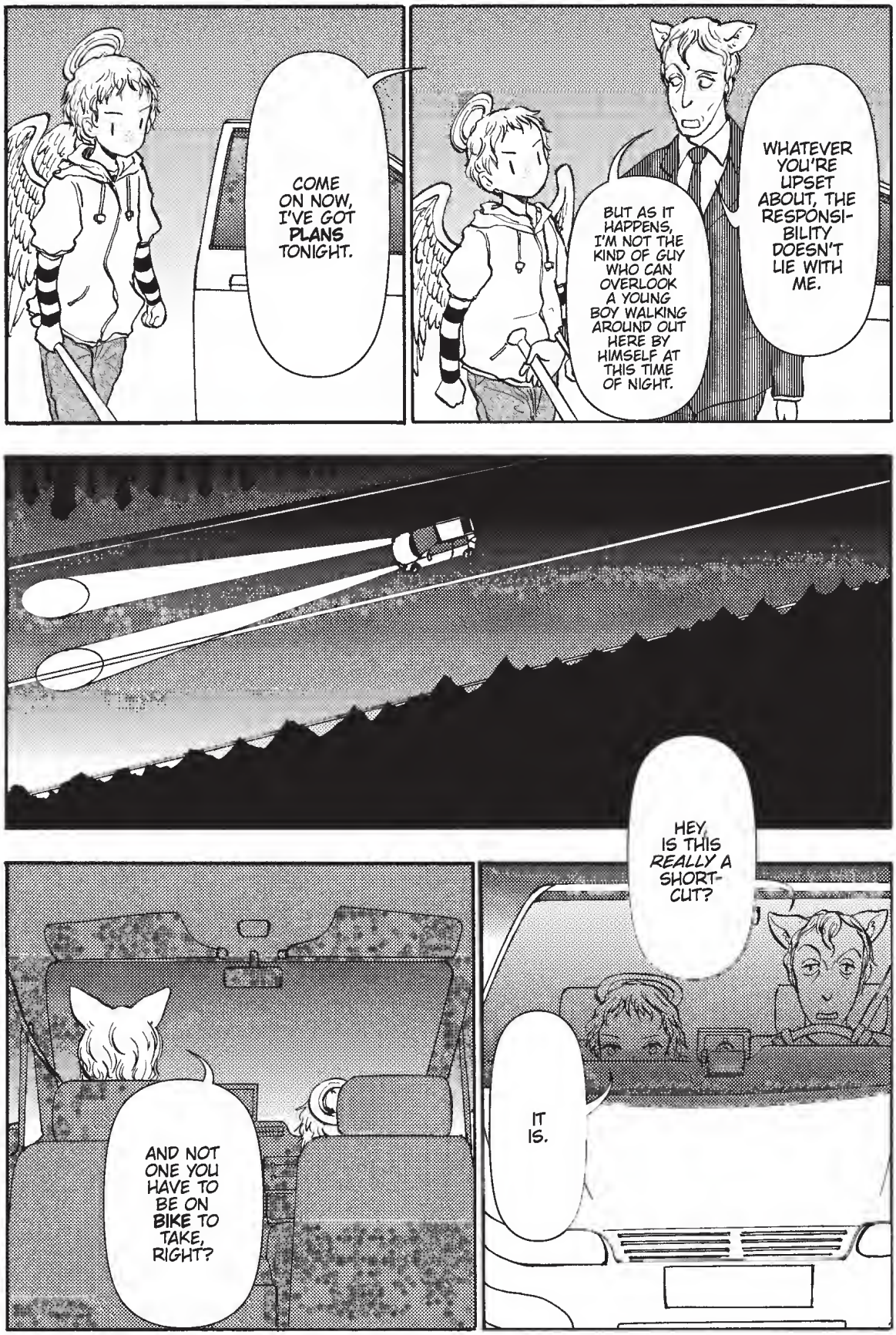

K-
TUNK
I'M OFF TO SCHOOL, DAD.
MM...
GOOD MORN-ING, MR. PHIL.
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL TODAY, GEORGIE.
STOP

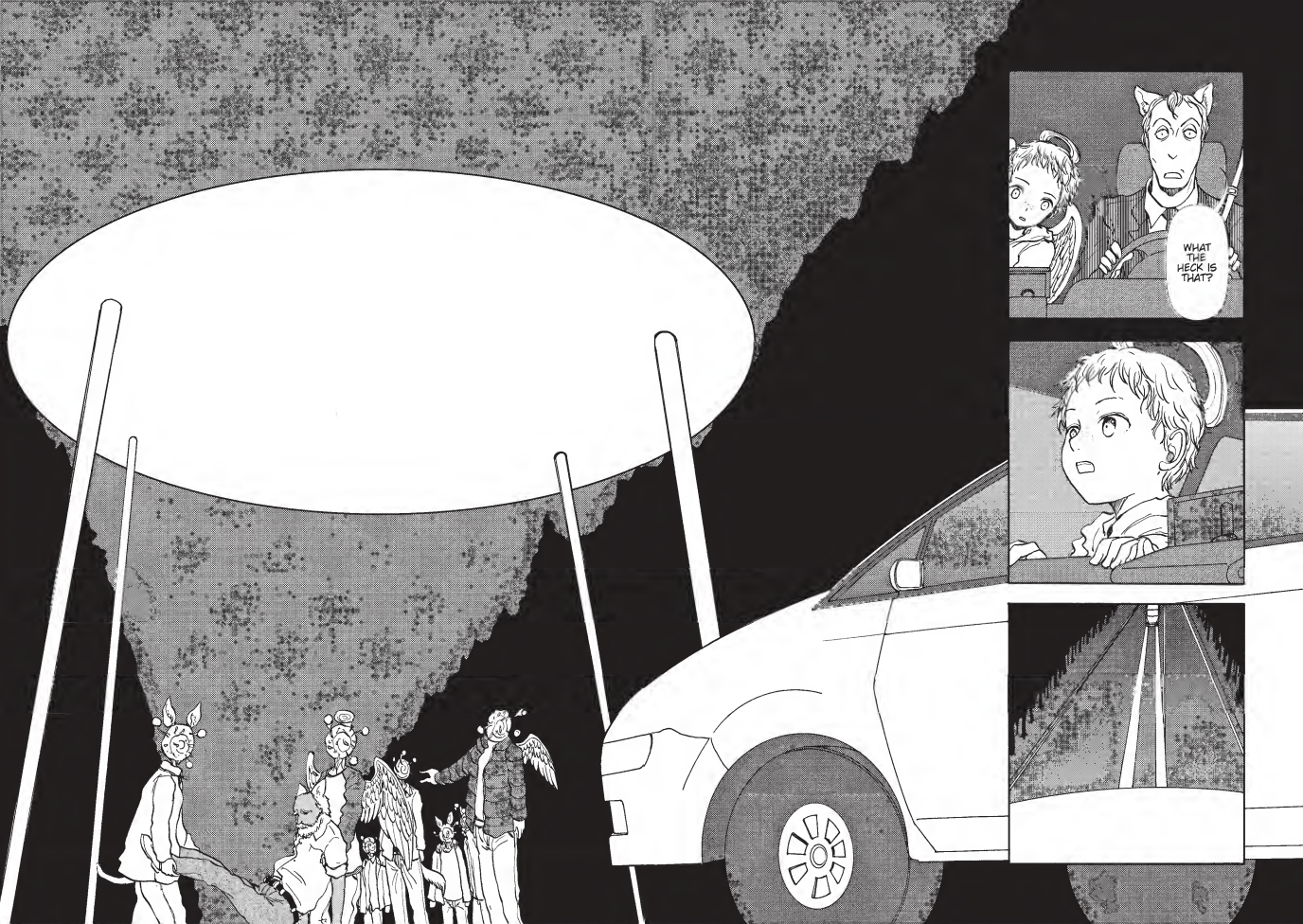

DAD'S BEEN SO WEIRD LATELY.
SOME-THING HAPPENED.
HOTEL G
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. HE'S TO BLAME.

RUSTLE
KRICK
I MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I'VE GOT A BLACK BELT IN JIU-JITSU.
OWW! GET OFF ME!
THE COUNTRY SURE IS SCARY. TO THINK, A KID OF YOUR AGE COMMITTING ARMED ROBBERY.

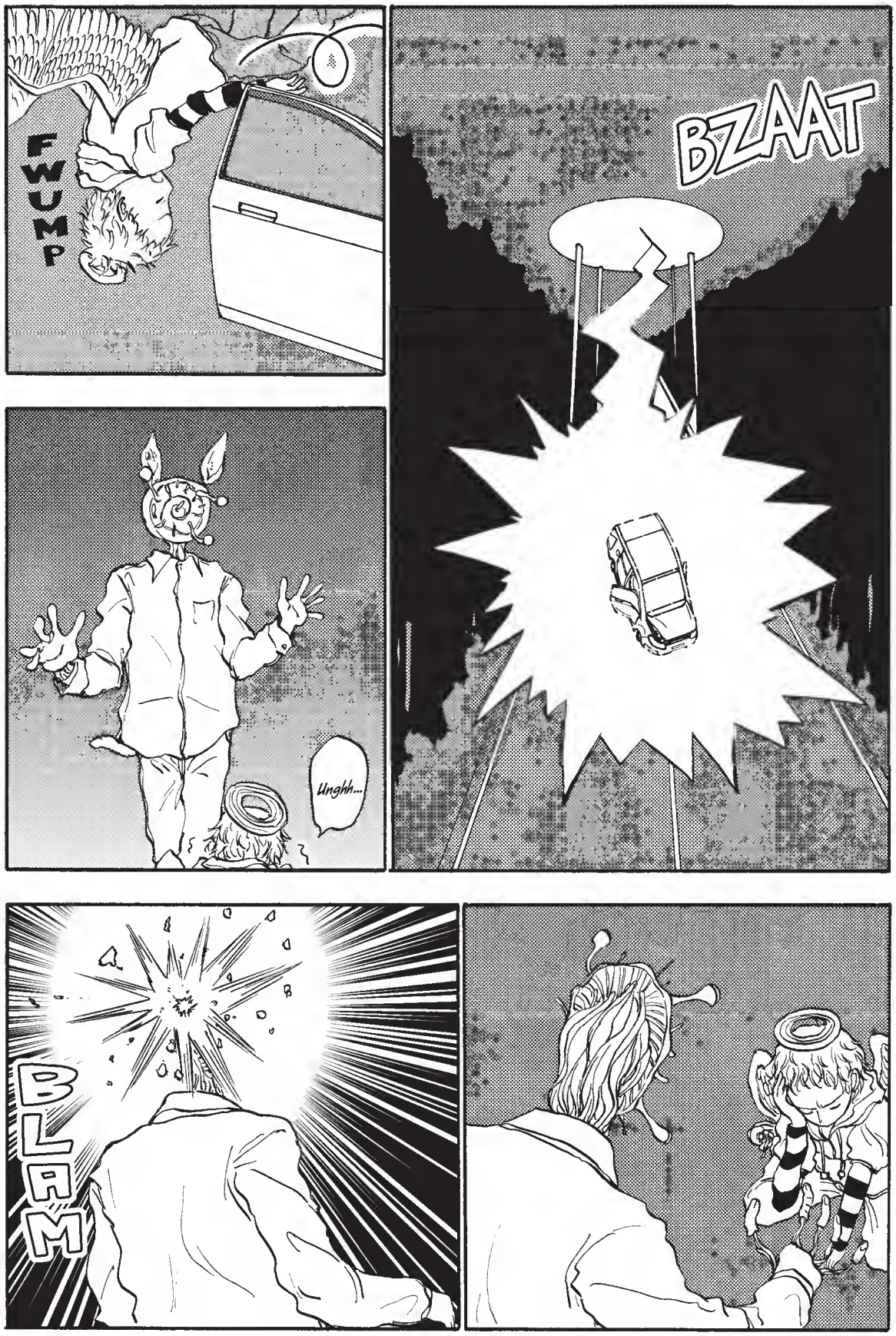

AS FAR AS I KNOW, HE ATE AND DRANK HIS FILL AND THEN WENT HOME.
MR. SHORT-STREET? ME?
YOU DID SOMETHING TO MY DAD AT THAT INFORMATION SESSION THINGY, DIDN'T YA?!
NO, THAT'S NOT IT!
THIS IS EXACTLY WHY I TRIED SO HARD TO GIVE HIM A RIDE!
DON'T TELL ME HE HAD AN ACCIDENT ON HIS WAY HOME?
WHAT'D YOU DO TO HIM?!
HE JUST WALKS AROUND IN A DAZE!
MY DAD'S BEEN ACTING WEIRD EVER SINCE THAT DAY!


All in the name of progress, though.
FWAP
AH! PERHAPS MY SESSION LEFT HIM FRETTING ABOUT THE DIRECTION OUR NATION'S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IS HEADED. THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?
WELL, I'M SURE I DON'T HAVE THE FOGGI-EST...
GET IN. I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

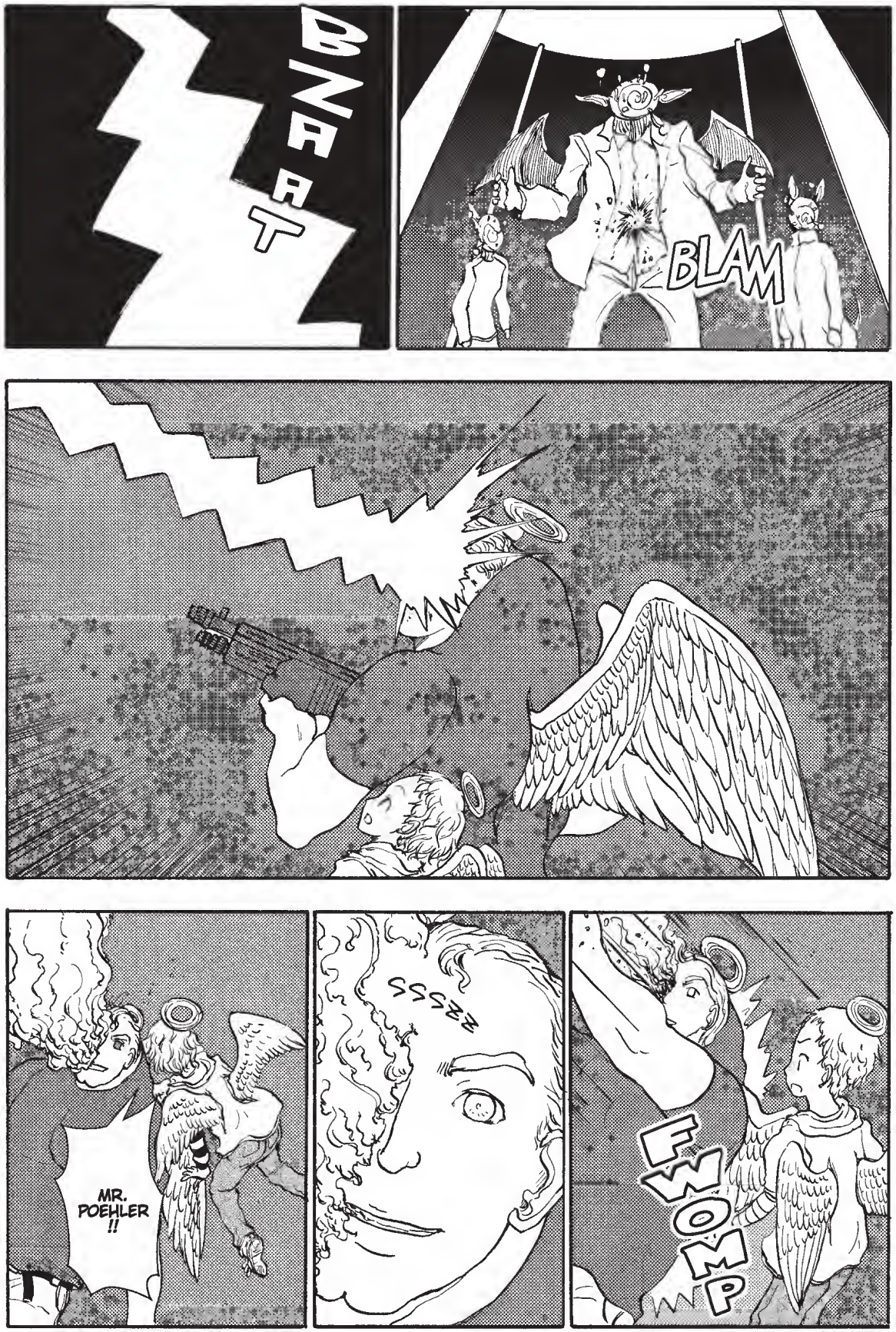

COME ON NOW, I'VE GOT **PLANS** TONIGHT.
BUT AS IT HAPPENS, I'M NOT THE KIND OF GUY WHO CAN OVERLOOK A YOUNG BOY WALKING AROUND OUT HERE BY HIMSELF AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT.
WHATEVER YOU'RE UPSET ABOUT, THE RESPONSIBILITY DOESN'T LIE WITH ME.
HEY, IS THIS *REALLY* A SHORT-CUT?
IT IS.
AND NOT ONE YOU HAVE TO BE ON **BIKE** TO TAKE, RIGHT?


WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?

MR. PHIL!
SPACE ALIENS?!
I ♡
VUURR
DON'T BE RIDICU-LOUS!
YOU'RE A JIU-JITSU MASTER, RIGHT?!
WE HAVE TO SAVE THEM!!
KA-CHAK
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
I also don't have a gun! I believe in gun control!
I'M NOT A NINJA!

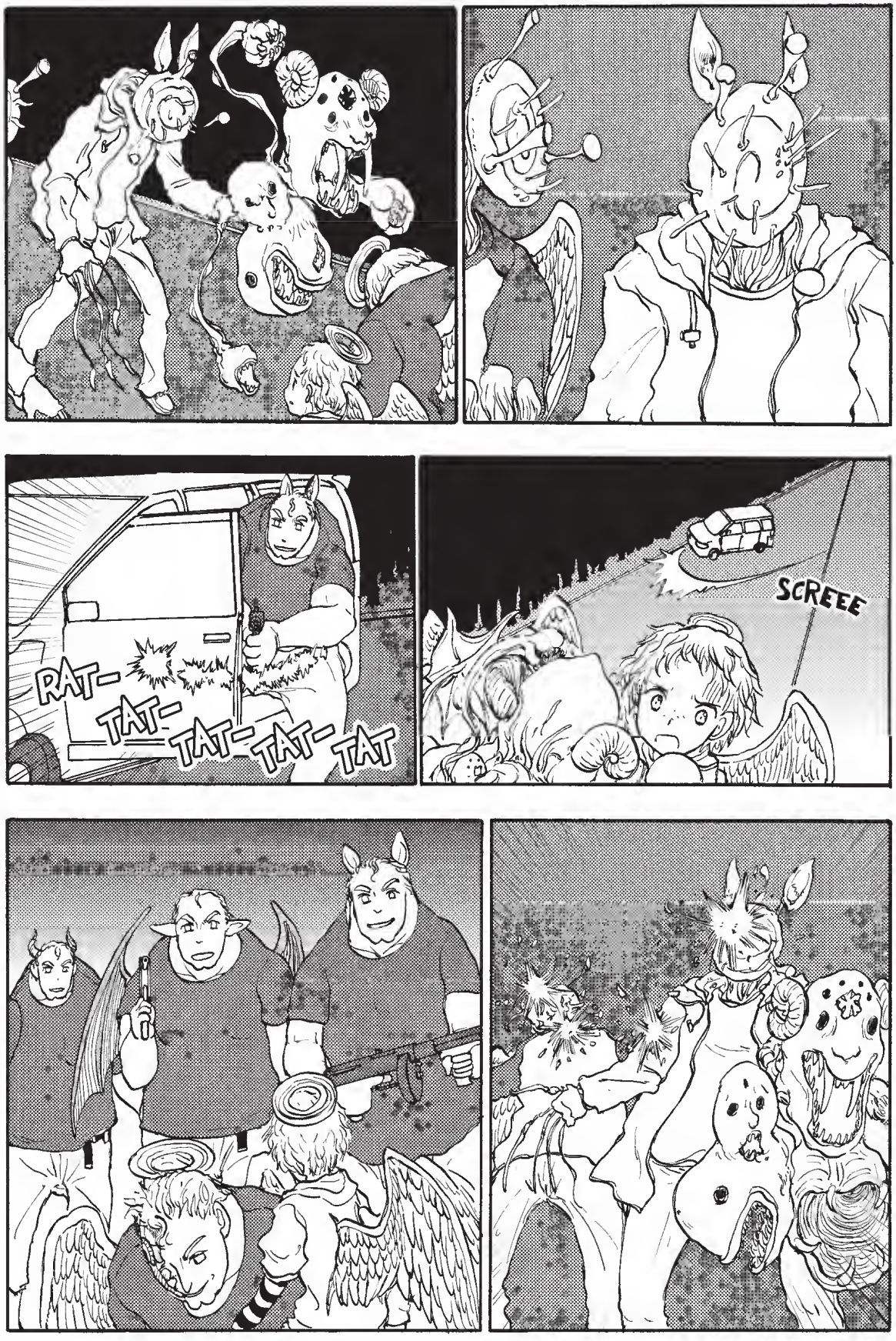

FWUMP
BZAAT
Unghh...
BLAM

YOU ALL RIGHT, GEORGIE?!
MR. POEHLER!
EVIL ALIENS FR'M OUTER SPACE, GEORGIE. BODY SNATCHERS.
WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS?!
BLAM
BLAM

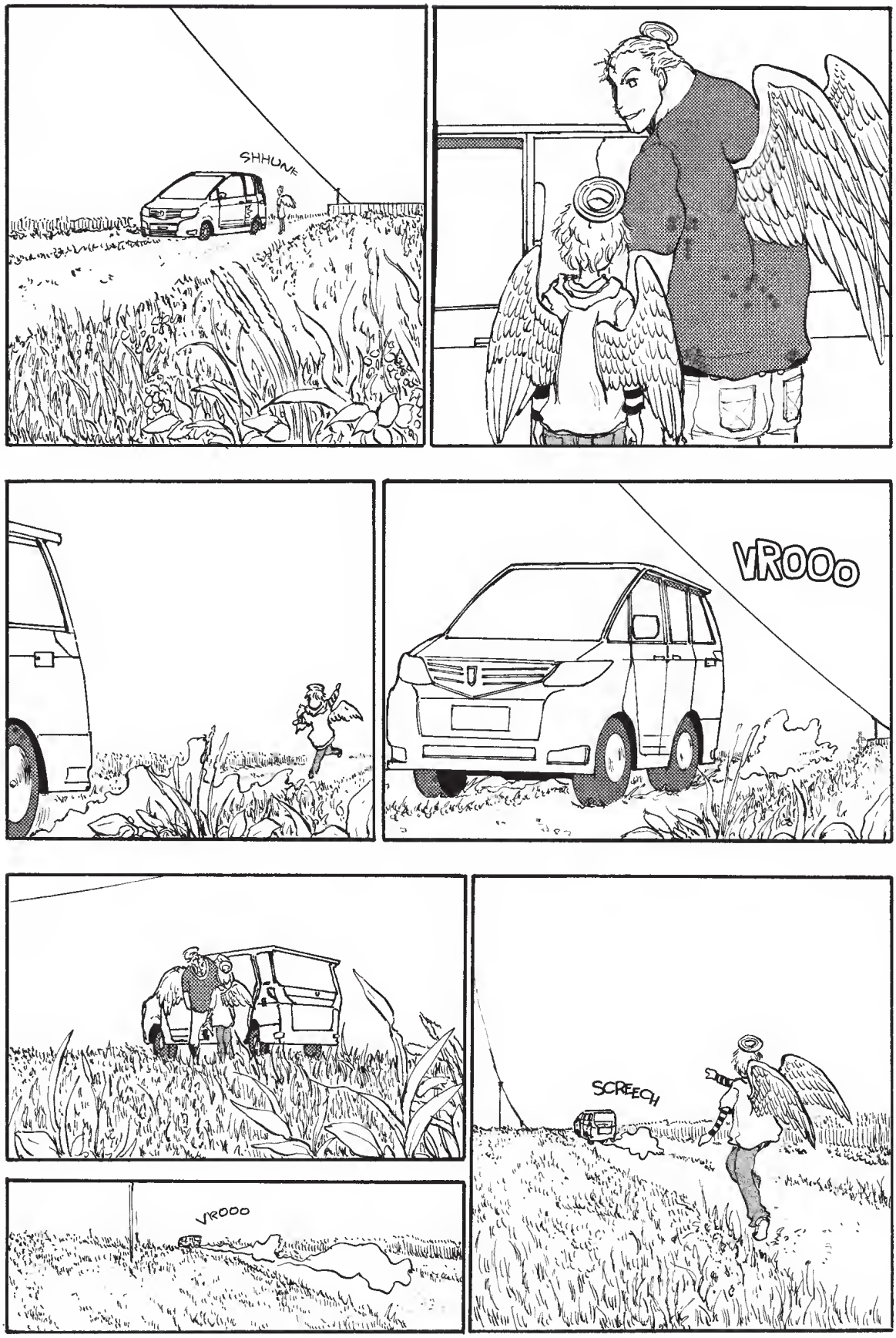

BNAT
BLAM
MR. POEHLER !!
zzzzz
FWOMP

I ♡
STAY AWAY FROM ME--!
FA-WHIP

KA-
BOOM


RAT-
TAT-
TAT-
TAT-
TAT
SCREEE

DAD!!


SHHUNK
VROOo
SCREECH
VROOO

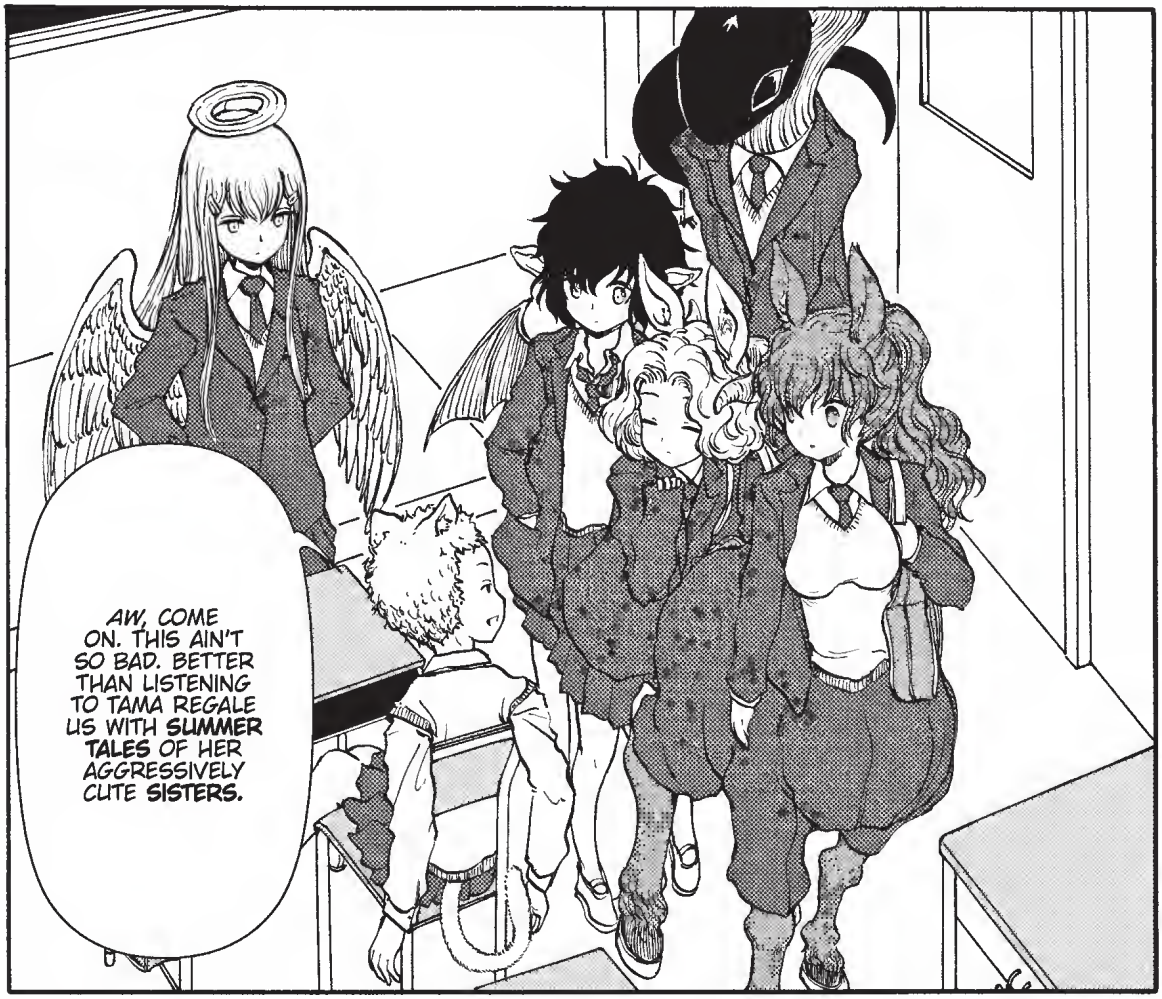
A CentaUr's Life

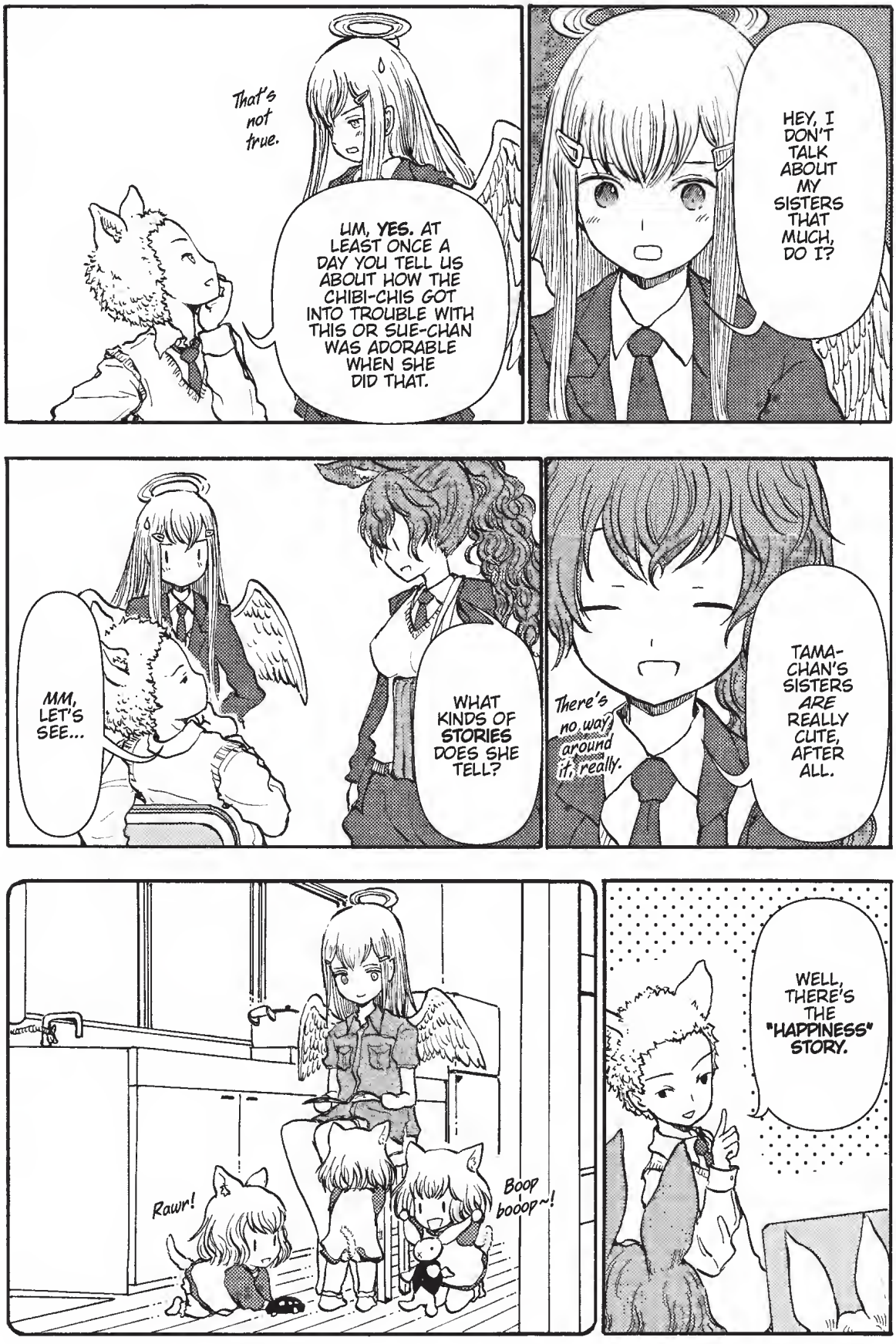
HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)
TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI (?-1598)

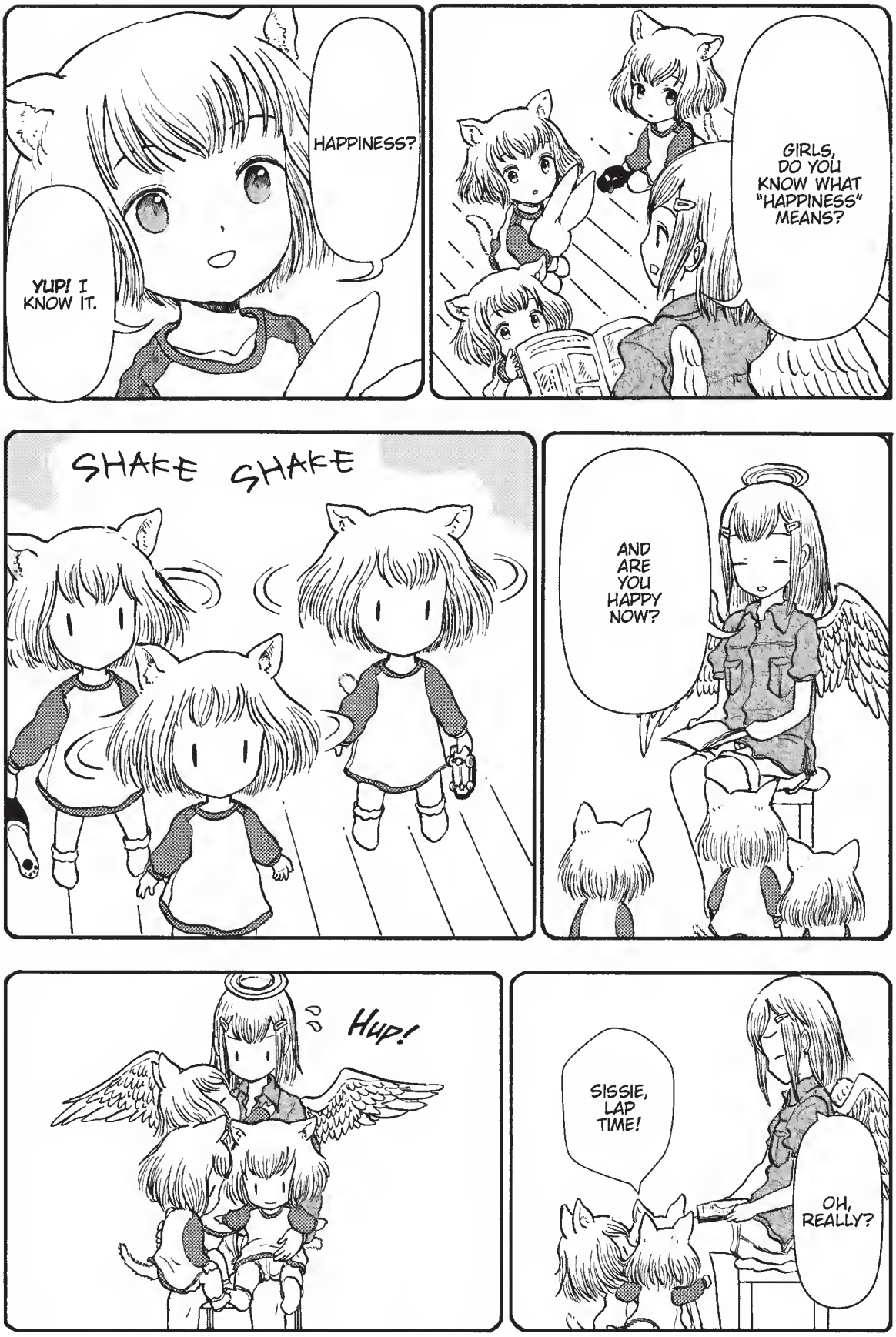
A SAMURAI GENERAL OF THE WARRING STATES (*SENGOKU*) PERIOD. AMONG MANY OTHER THEORIES, IT IS SPECULATED THAT HE WAS BORN THE SON OF A PEASANT FOOT SOLDIER, BUT WHATEVER THE CASE, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE CAME FROM A LOW-CLASS BACKGROUND. HOWEVER, CONTRARY TO THE IMPRESSION THAT WOULD DEVELOP OVER THE COMING CENTURIES THAT SOLDIERS WERE TYPICALLY CENTAURS, IT WAS IN FACT NOT UNCOMMON FOR DRACONIDS TO BECOME *DAIMYO*. FIRST DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF UNDER THE ODA CLAN, HE IS WELL KNOWN FOR AT LAST UNIFYING JAPAN AFTER THE DEATH OF NOBUNAGA. HE IS ALSO WELL KNOWN FOR THE POEM, "IF THE CUCKOO DOES NOT SING, COAX IT" (LIKELY DEVISED AFTER HIS LIFETIME), BUT IN REALITY HIS PERSONALITY WAS LIKELY BETTER ENCAPSULATED WITH THE POEM ASCRIBED TO NOBUNAGA: "IF THE CUCKOO DOES NOT SING, KILL IT." SOFTENING THIS SEEMINGLY BRUTAL IMAGE, HOWEVER, WAS HIS DEEP PASSION FOR CULTURE. HIDEYOSHI WAS AN AVID LOVER OF NOH THEATER, A DISCERNING CONNOISSEUR OF TEAS, A SKILLED WRITER AND MUSICIAN, AND A SPLENDID *GO* PLAYER. WHILE THIS MAY HAVE BEEN IN PART A COMPENSATION FOR HIS OWN CRUDE BACKGROUND, HE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE HAD AN INNATE KNACK FOR THESE THINGS. LIKEWISE ON THE BATTLEFIELD, HE WAS A SKILLED TACTICIAN KNOWN FOR OVERWHELMING THE ENEMY WITH INCREDIBLE WEALTH AND SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY, SUGGESTING DEEP TIES WITH COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL MERCHANTS, BUT DUE TO THE SCARCITY OF DOCUMENTS FROM THE ODA-TOYOTOMI GOVERNMENT, LITTLE CAN BE SAID FOR CERTAIN. HE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE HAD SIX FINGERS ON HIS RIGHT HAND AND TWO TAILS.

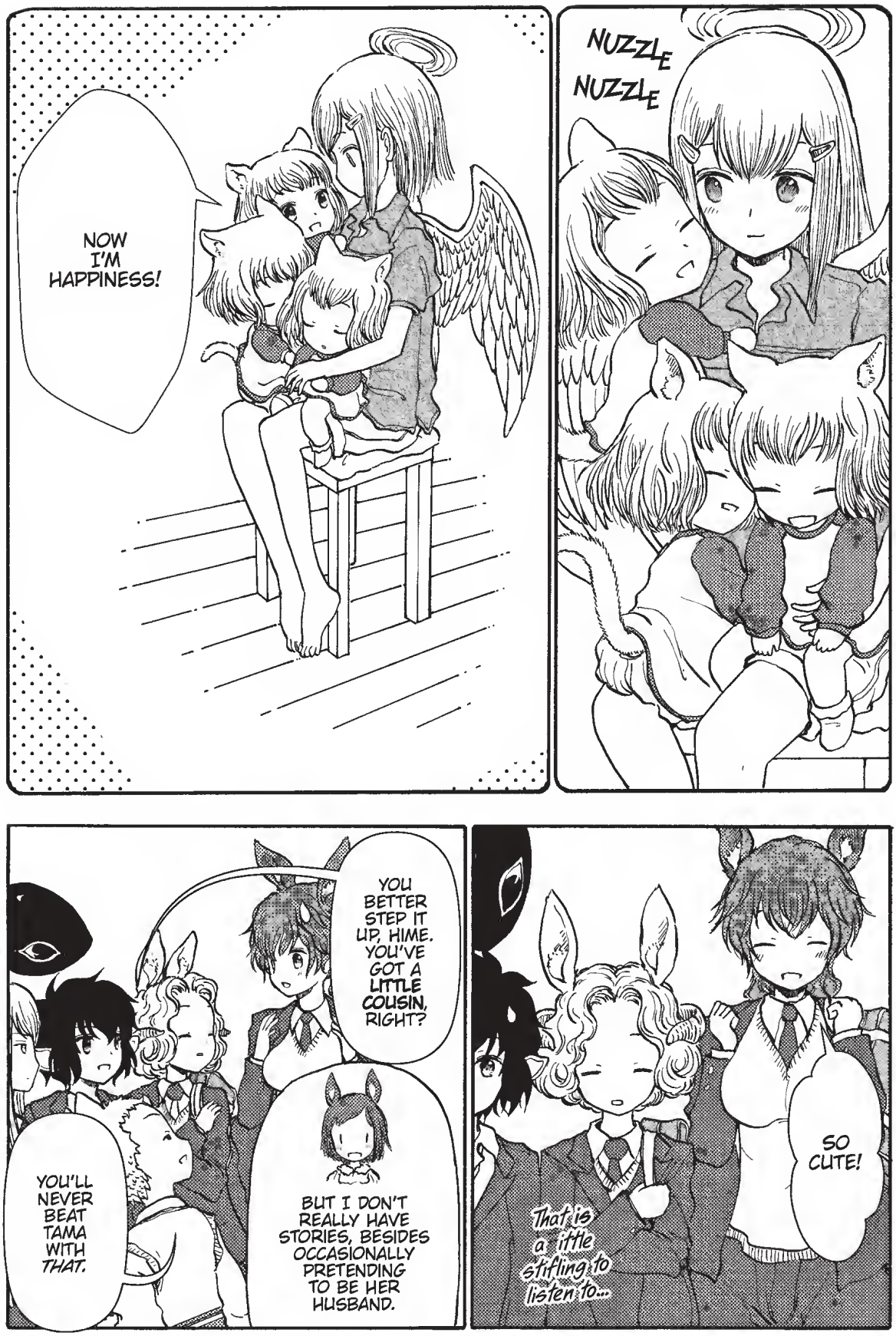
IS IT?
IT'S SO COLD.

CHAPTER 43


AW, COME ON. THIS AIN'T SO BAD. BETTER THAN LISTENING TO TAMA REGALE US WITH **SUMMER TALES** OF HER AGGRESSIVELY CUTE **SISTERS.**


That's not true.
UM, YES. AT LEAST ONCE A DAY YOU TELL US ABOUT HOW THE CHIBI-CHIS GOT INTO TROUBLE WITH THIS OR SUE-CHAN WAS ADORABLE WHEN SHE DID THAT.
HEY, I DON'T TALK ABOUT MY SISTERS THAT MUCH, DO I?
MM, LET'S SEE...
WHAT KINDS OF STORIES DOES SHE TELL?
There's no way around it, really.
TAMA-CHAN'S SISTERS ARE REALLY CUTE, AFTER ALL.
Rawr!
Boop booop~!
WELL, THERE'S THE "HAPPINESS" STORY.

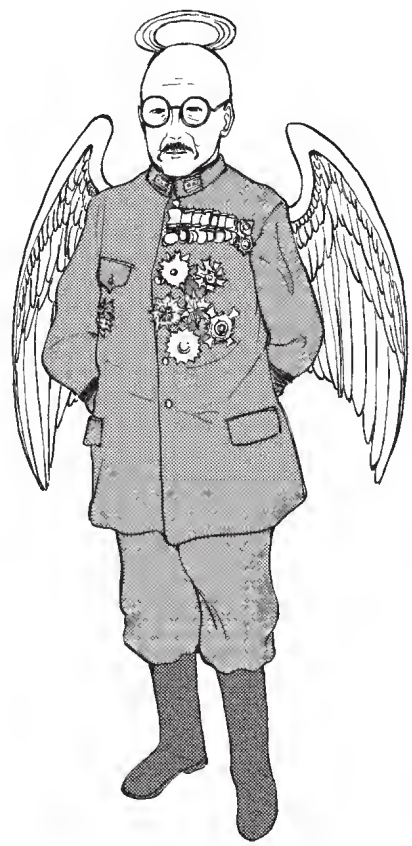

HAPPINESS?
YUP! I KNOW IT.
GIRLS, DO YOU KNOW WHAT "HAPPINESS" MEANS?
SHAKE SHAKE
AND ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?
HUP!
SISSIE, LAP TIME!
OH, REALLY?

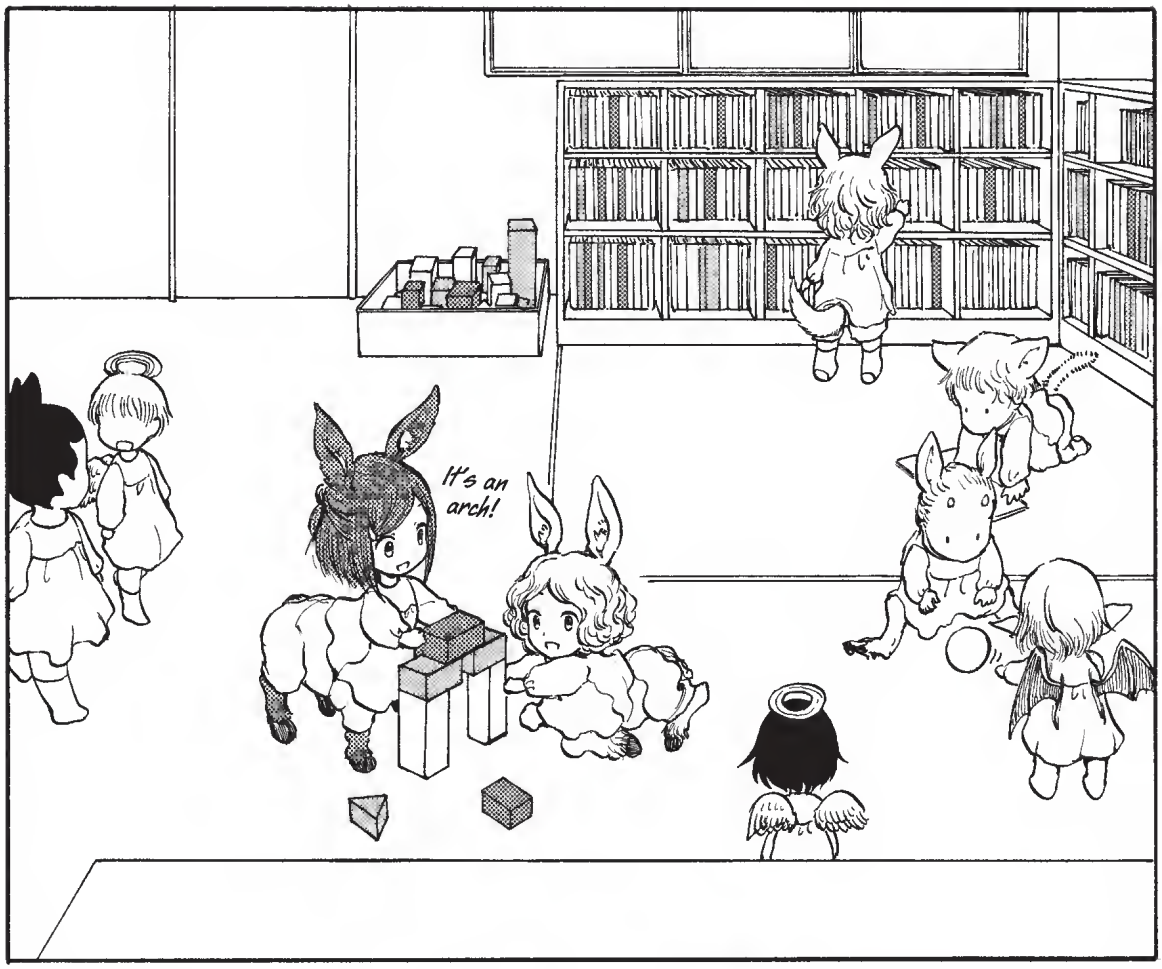

NOW I'M HAPPINESS!
NUZZLE NUZZLE
YOU BETTER STEP IT UP, HIME. YOU'VE GOT A LITTLE COUSIN, RIGHT?
BUT I DON'T REALLY HAVE STORIES, BESIDES OCCASIONALLY PRETENDING TO BE HER HUSBAND.
YOU'LL NEVER BEAT TAMA WITH THAT.
That is a little stifling to listen to...
SO CUTE!

A CentaUr's Life

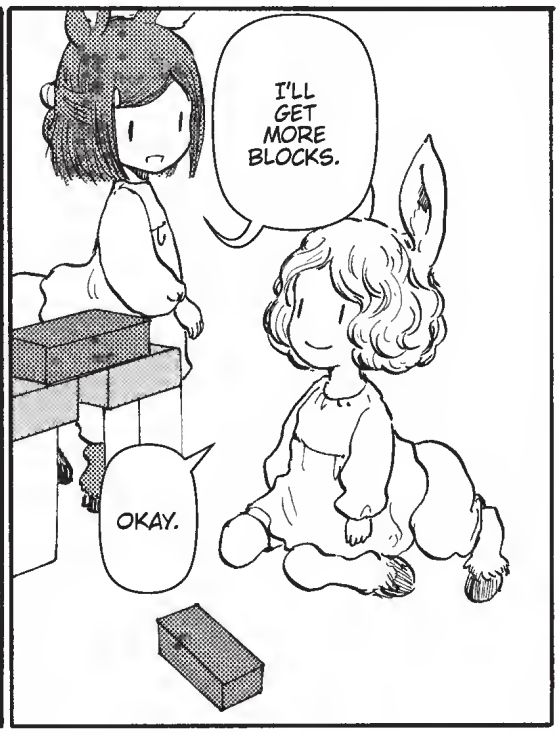
HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)
TOJO HIDEKI
(1884-1948)

A SHOWA-ERA ARMY GENERAL AND POLITICIAN. AFTER SERVING IN THE KANTO ARMY, HE ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF CHIEF OF STAFF AND VICE WAR MINISTER, FINALLY BECOMING PRIME MINISTER AND LEADING JAPAN INTO THE PACIFIC WAR. HE HAS BEEN WIDELY PRAISED AND CRITICIZED, BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS: A HARDWORKING MAN, HE PLACED TOO LITTLE VALUE ON ANYTHING *OTHER* THAN HARD WORK; THOUGH COMPASSIONATE TOWARD THOSE BENEATH HIM, HE WAS CRUEL TO THOSE NOT ON HIS SIDE; THOUGH HE WAS GOOD-NATURED AT HEART, HE MADE LIBERAL USE OF THE MILITARY POLICE; THOUGH SKILLED, CAUTIOUS, ORDERLY, AND AS PURE "AS A GIRLS' SCHOOL HEADMASTER," HE LACKED THE PERSPECTIVE OR BROAD VISION FITTING OF A POLITICIAN.

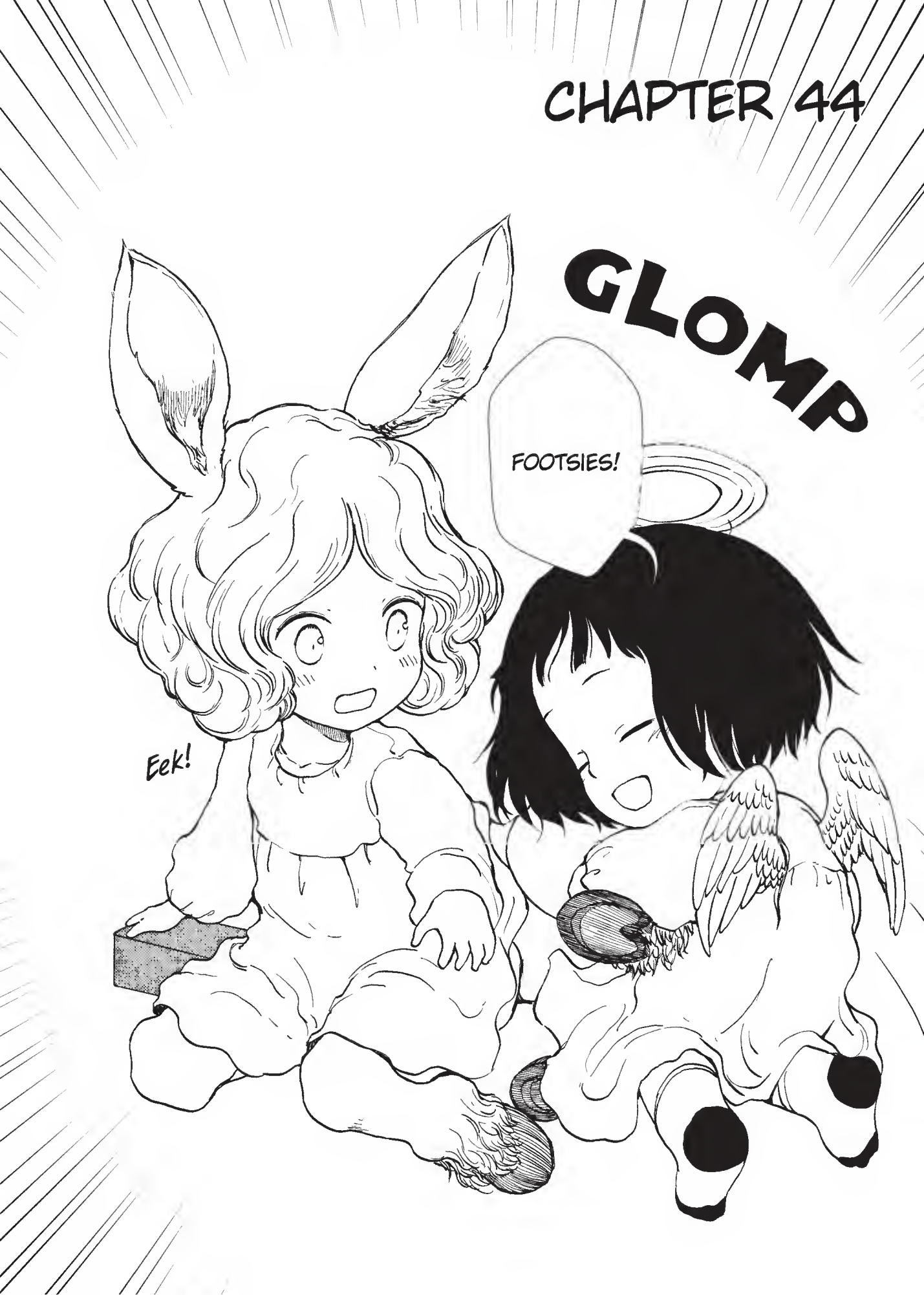



It's an arch!

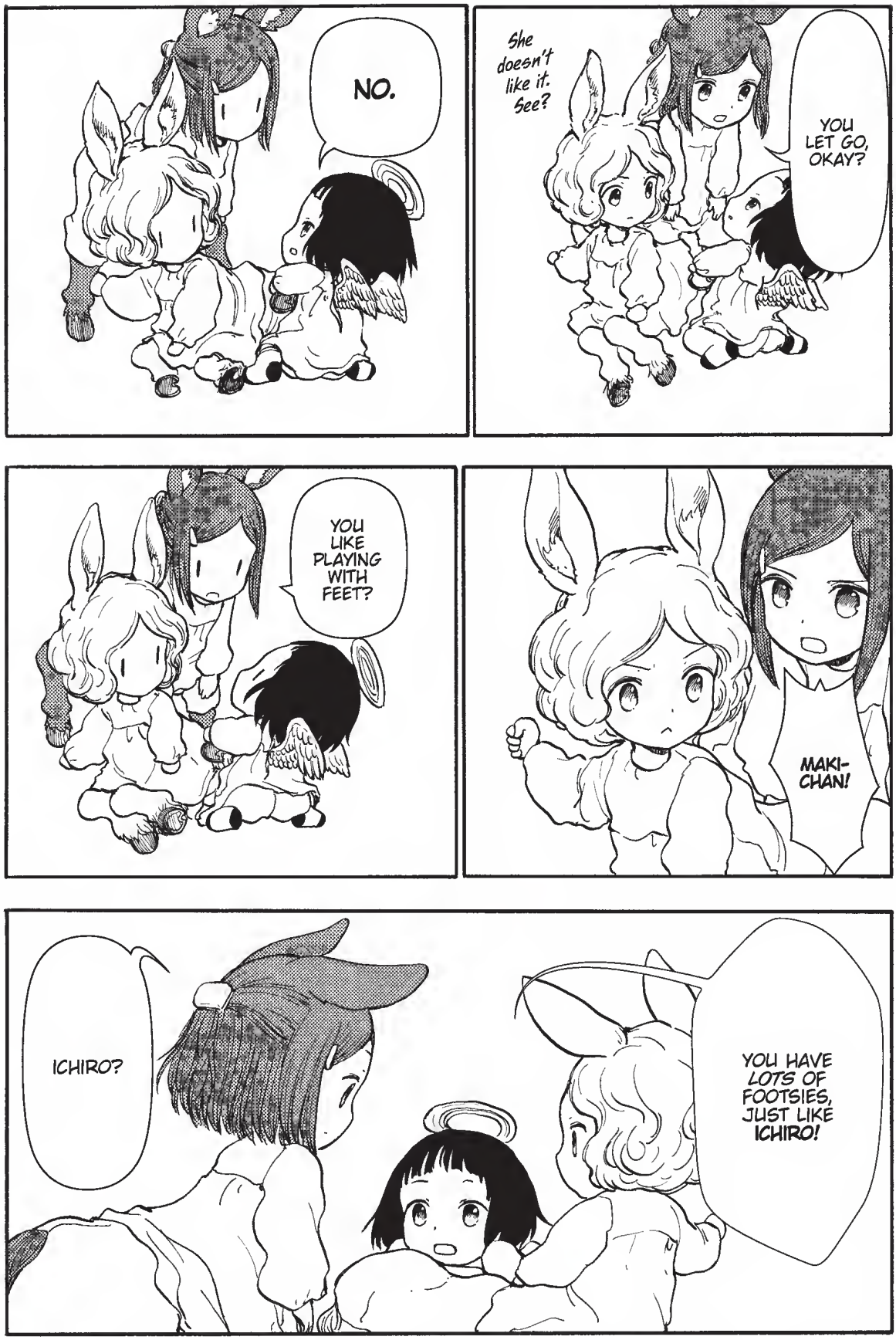
Wanna play blocks?
WHAT?

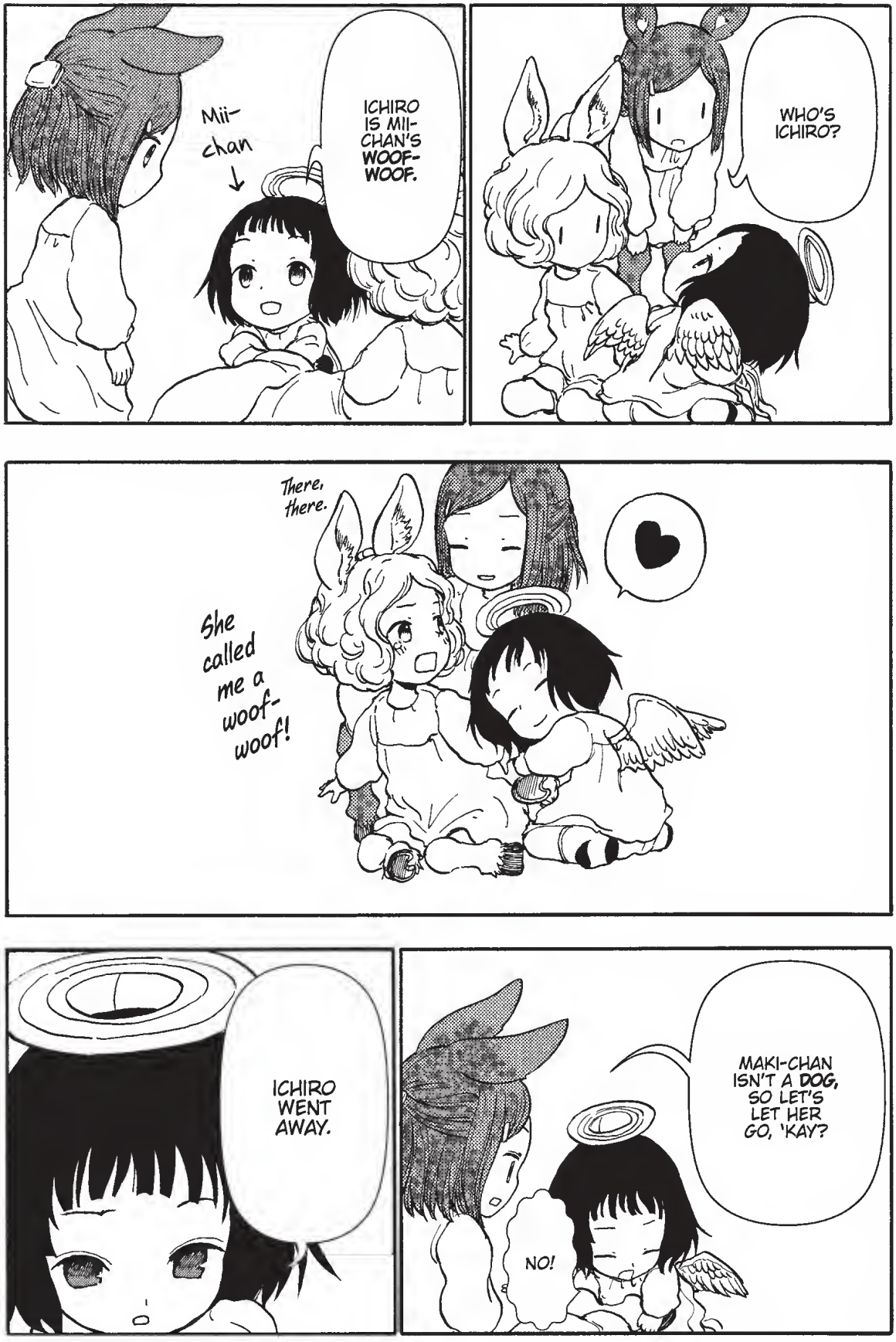

I'LL GET MORE BLOCKS.
OKAY.

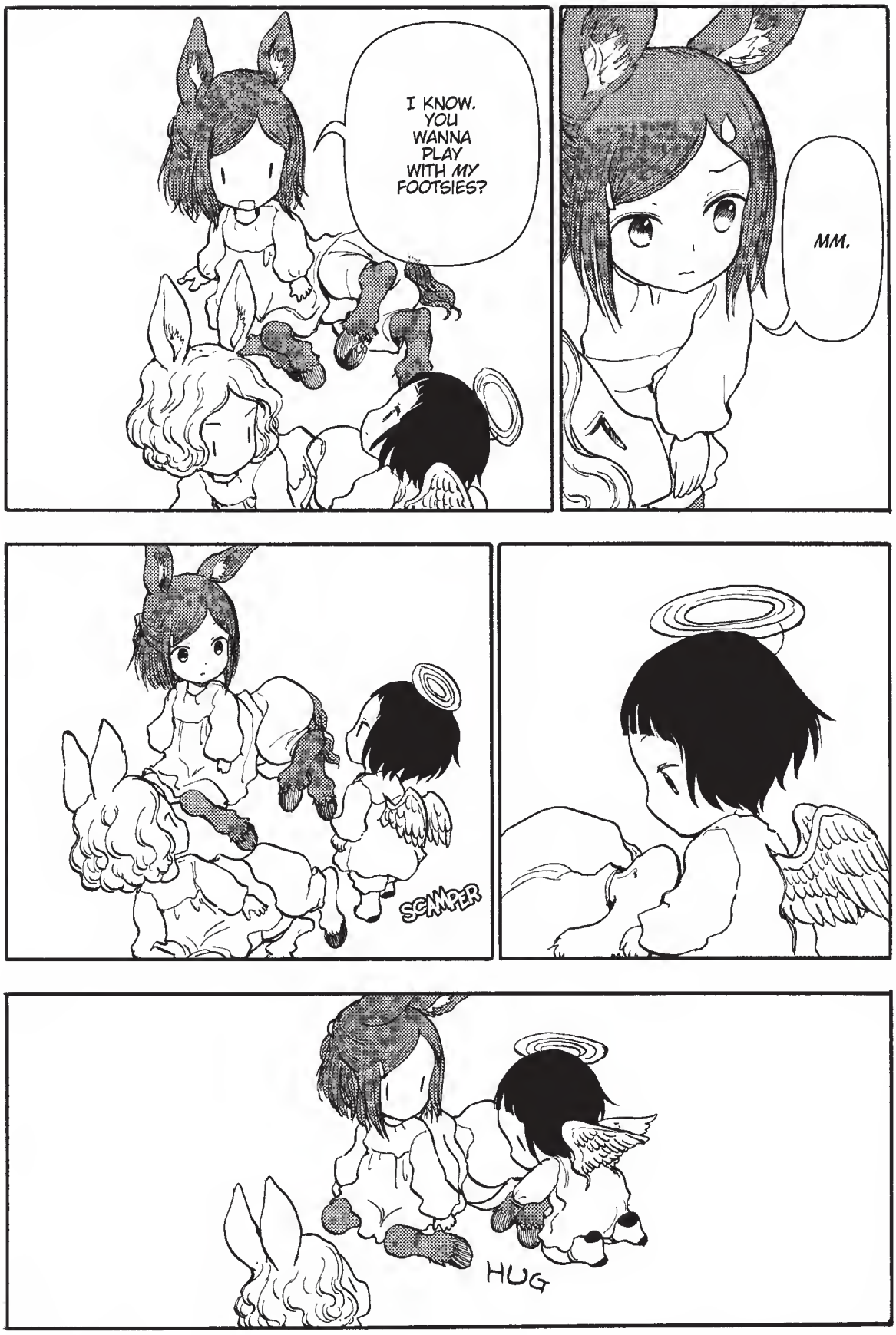
CHAPTER 44



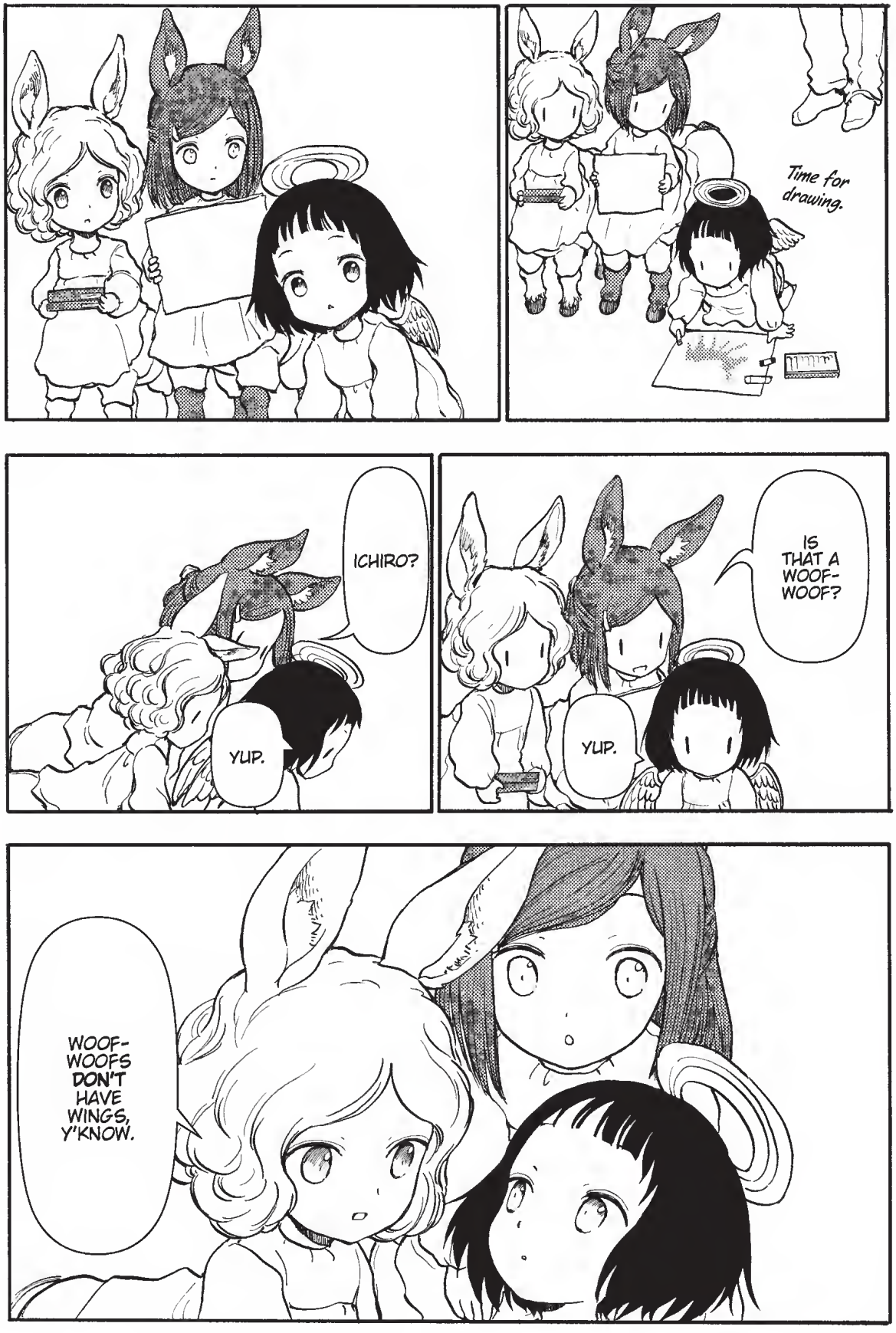
SQUEEZE
NOOO...
Aiyee!
SQUEEZE
LET GO.
NO.
BUT SHE WON'T LET GO OF ME!
DON'T DO THAT, MAKI-CHAN!


NO.
She doesn't like it. See?
YOU LET GO, OKAY?
YOU LIKE PLAYING WITH FEET?
MAKI-CHAN!
ICHIRO?
YOU HAVE LOTS OF FOOTSIES, JUST LIKE ICHIRO!

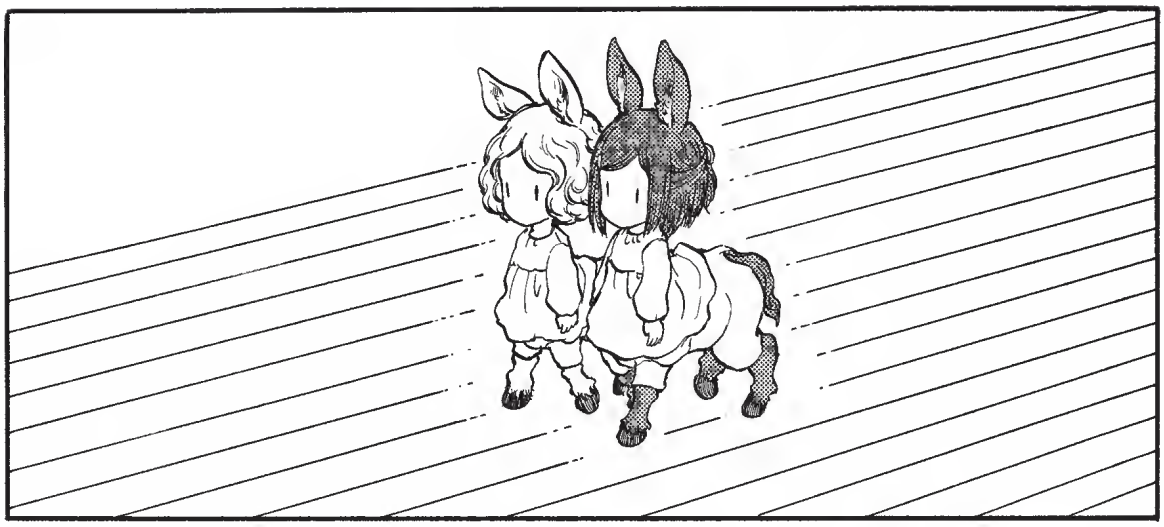

Mii-chan
ICHIRO IS MII-CHAN'S WOOF-WOOF.
WHO'S ICHIRO?
There, there.
She called me a woof-woof!
ICHIRO WENT AWAY.
NO!
MAKI-CHAN ISN'T A DOG, SO LET'S LET HER GO, 'KAY?

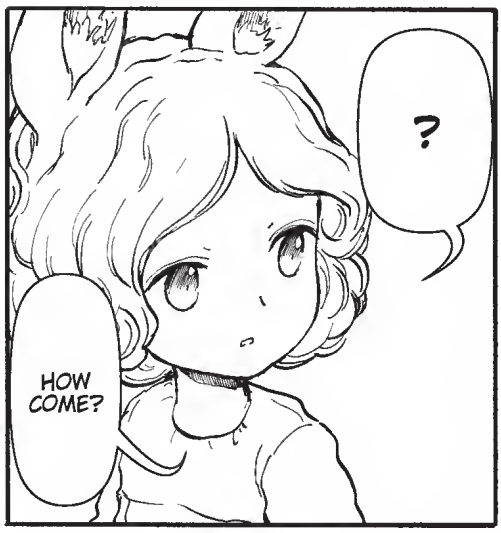

I KNOW. YOU WANNA PLAY WITH MY FOOTSIES?
MM.
SCMPER
HUG

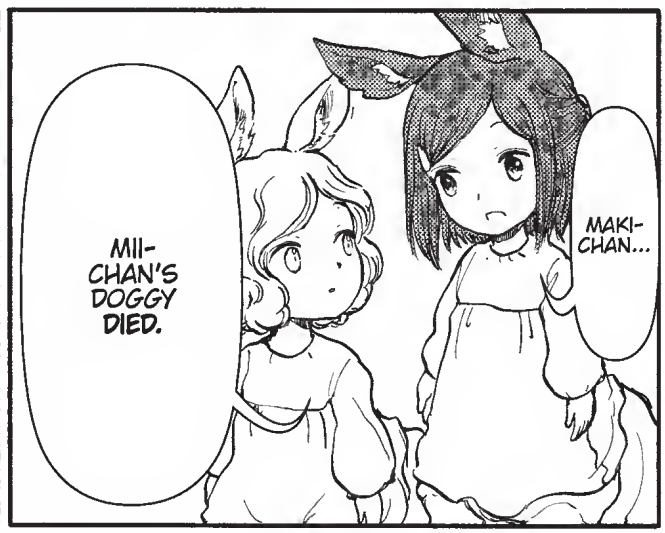
You too, Maki-chan?
NUZZLE
NUZZLE
This one's too big!
NO, NO, NO!
Noo, don't be gross!
Eek!
THIS ONE'S JUST RIGHT!


Time for drawing.
ICHIRO?
YUP.
IS THAT A WOOF-WOOF?
YUP.
WOOF-WOOFS DON'T HAVE WINGS, Y'KNOW.

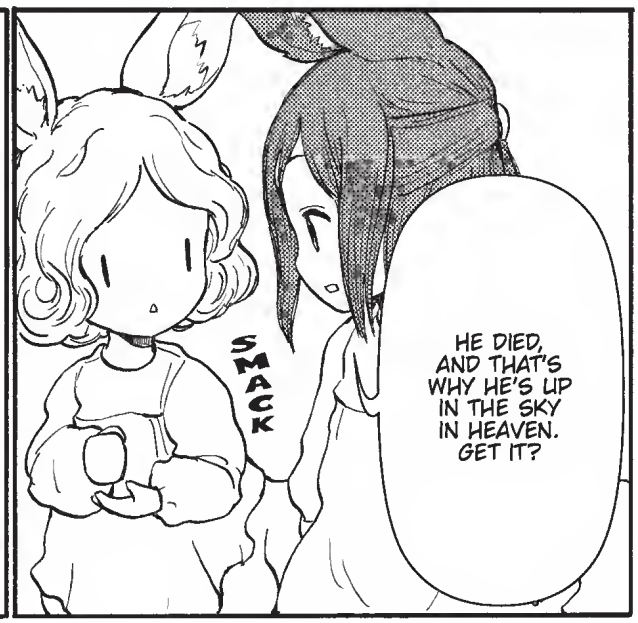
BUT DOGGIES DON'T FLY.
THAT'S BECAUSE ICHIRO'S UP IN THE SKY!
That's how come he's got wings!
MAKI-CHAN, WANNA GO TO THE BATH-ROOM?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. ICHIRO'S UP IN THE SKY.
Sniff...
OKAY.

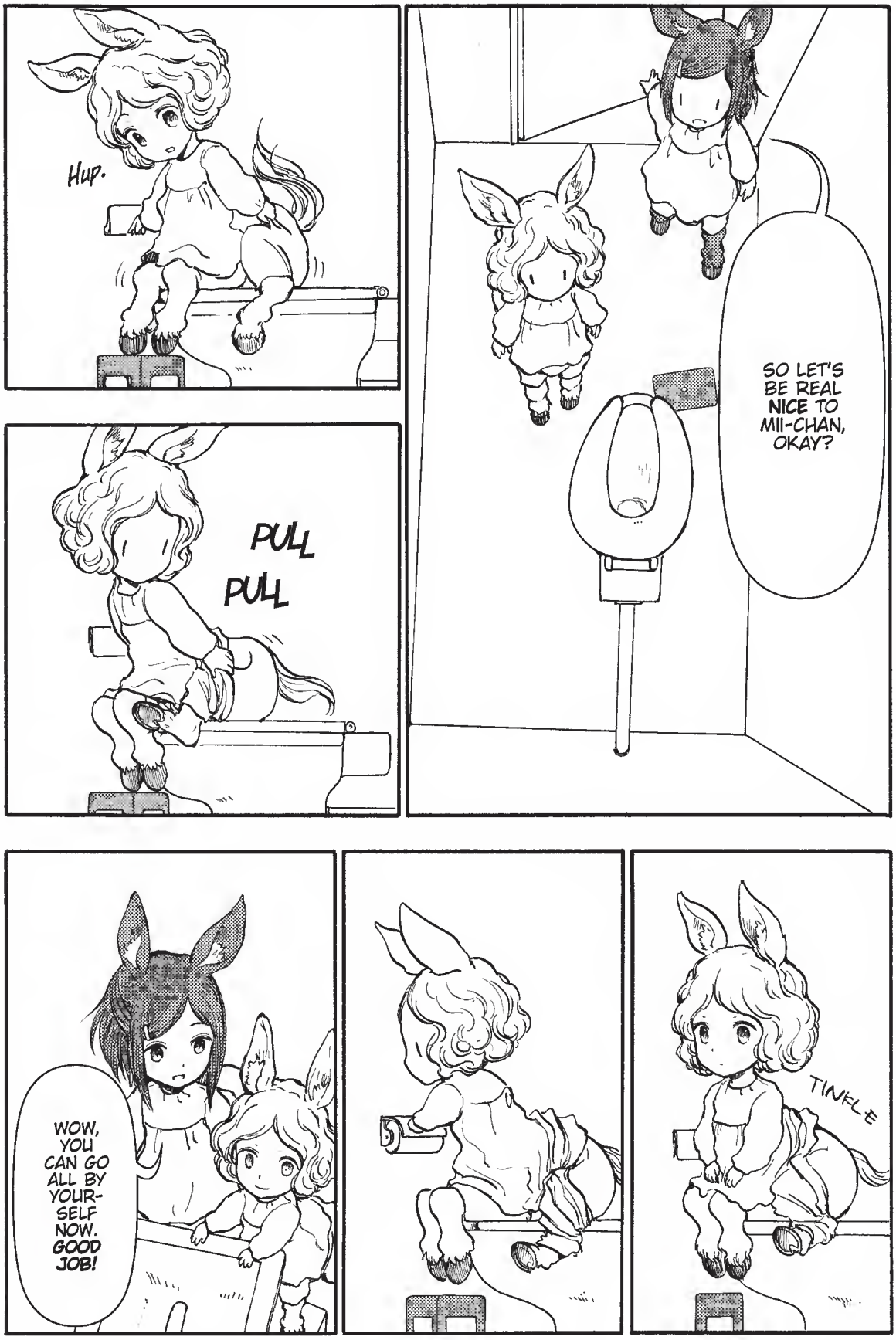



?
HOW COME?


MII-CHAN'S DOGGY DIED.
MAKI-CHAN...

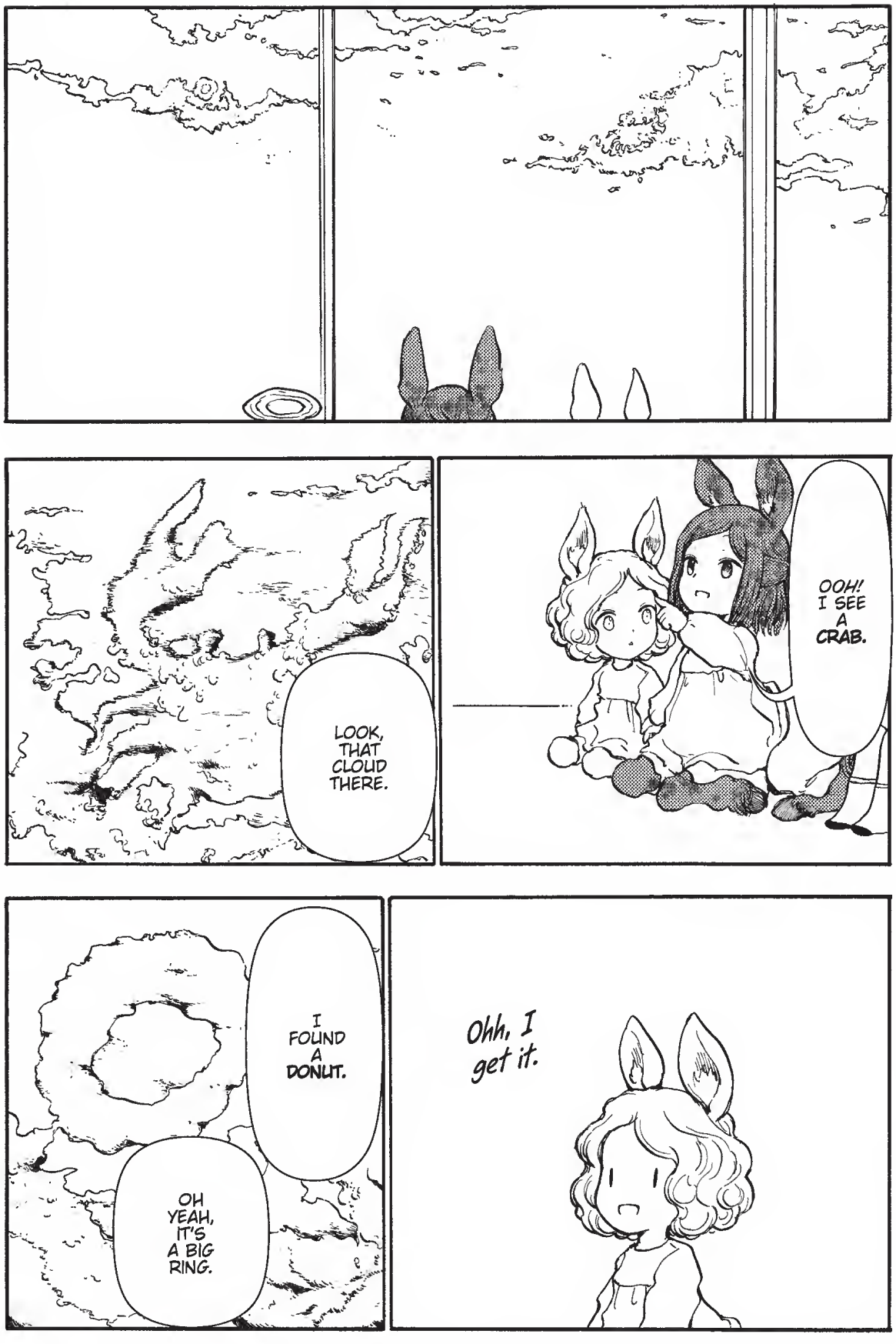
Shino, you're a genius!

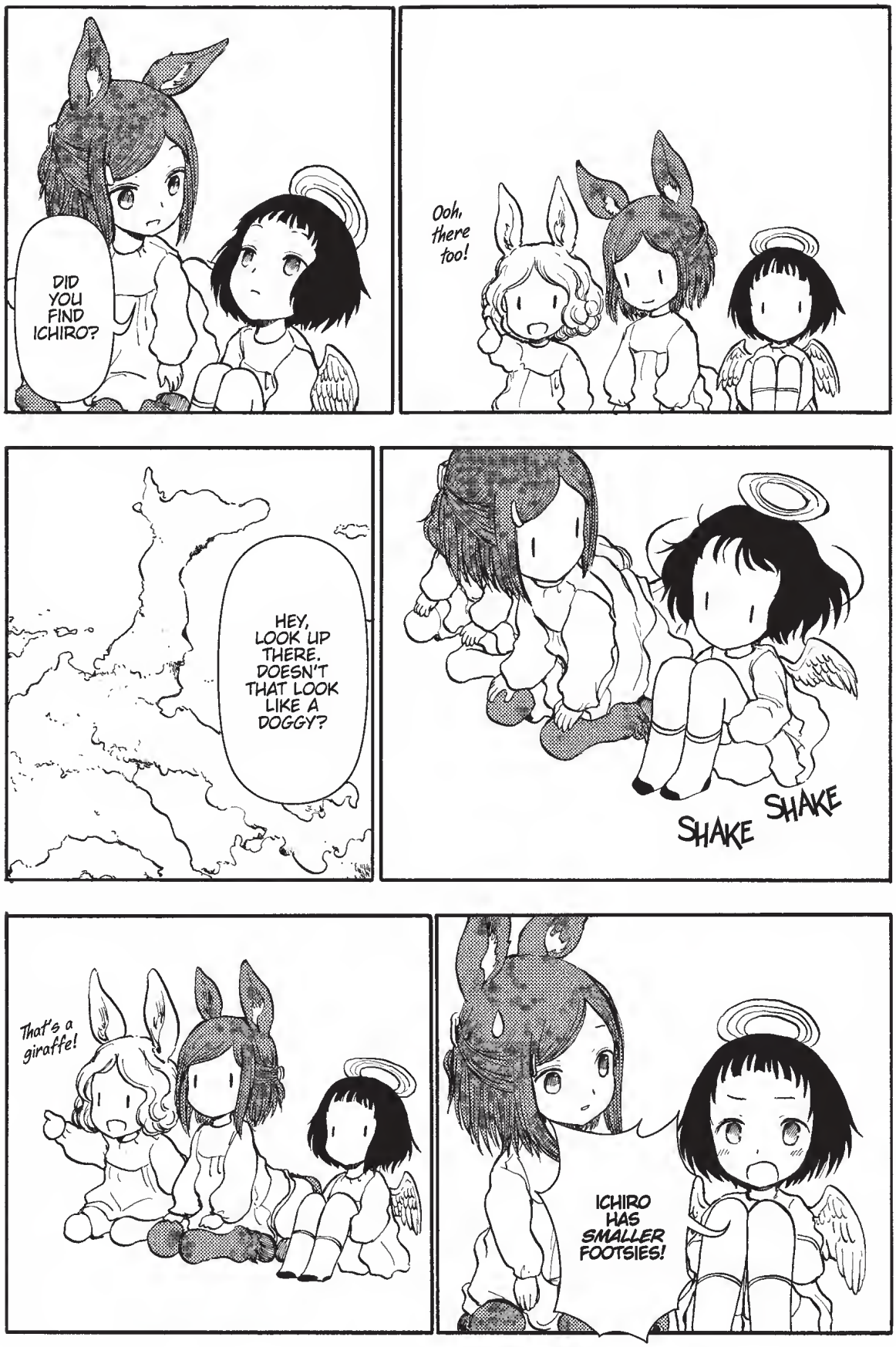

SMACK
HE DIED, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S UP IN THE SKY IN HEAVEN. GET IT?

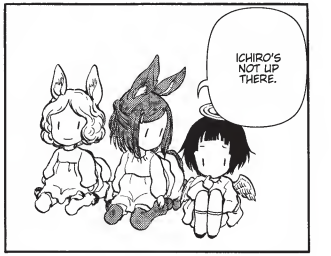

Hup.
PULL
PULL
SO LET'S BE REAL NICE TO MII-CHAN, OKAY?
WOW, YOU CAN GO ALL BY YOUR-SELF NOW. GOOD JOB!
TINKLE

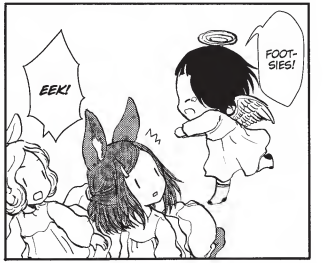
EVEN THOUGH HE DOESN'T HAVE WINGS?
HUH?
OH. YEAH. MUST BE.
IS MY DADDY UP IN THE SKY TOO?
OHH.
Shino, you know everything.
SPIRITS ARE LIGHT AND FLUFFY TOO, SO THEY CAN FLOAT.
CLOUDS DON'T HAVE WINGS AND THEY FLOAT AROUND IN THE SKY, RIGHT?
WHA?
NOT LIVING WITH ANOTHER LADY.
THEN I GUESS DADDY IS UP IN HEAVEN.

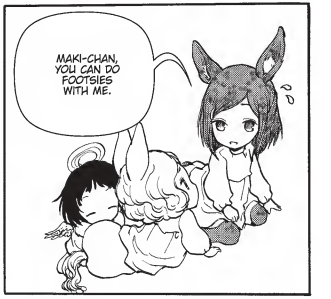
FINISHED DRAWING?
YUP.
YEAH.
THEN YOU WANNA LOOK OUTSIDE AND SEE IF ICHIRO'S UP THERE IN THE SKY?


LOOK, THAT CLOUD THERE.
OOH! I SEE A CRAB.
I FOUND A DONUT.
OH YEAH, IT'S A BIG RING.
Ohh, I get it.


DID YOU FIND ICHIRO?
Ooh, there too!
HEY, LOOK UP THERE. DOESN'T THAT LOOK LIKE A DOGGY?
SHAKE SHAKE
That's a giraffe!
ICHIRO HAS SMALLER FOOTSIES!


ICHIRO'S NOT UP THERE.

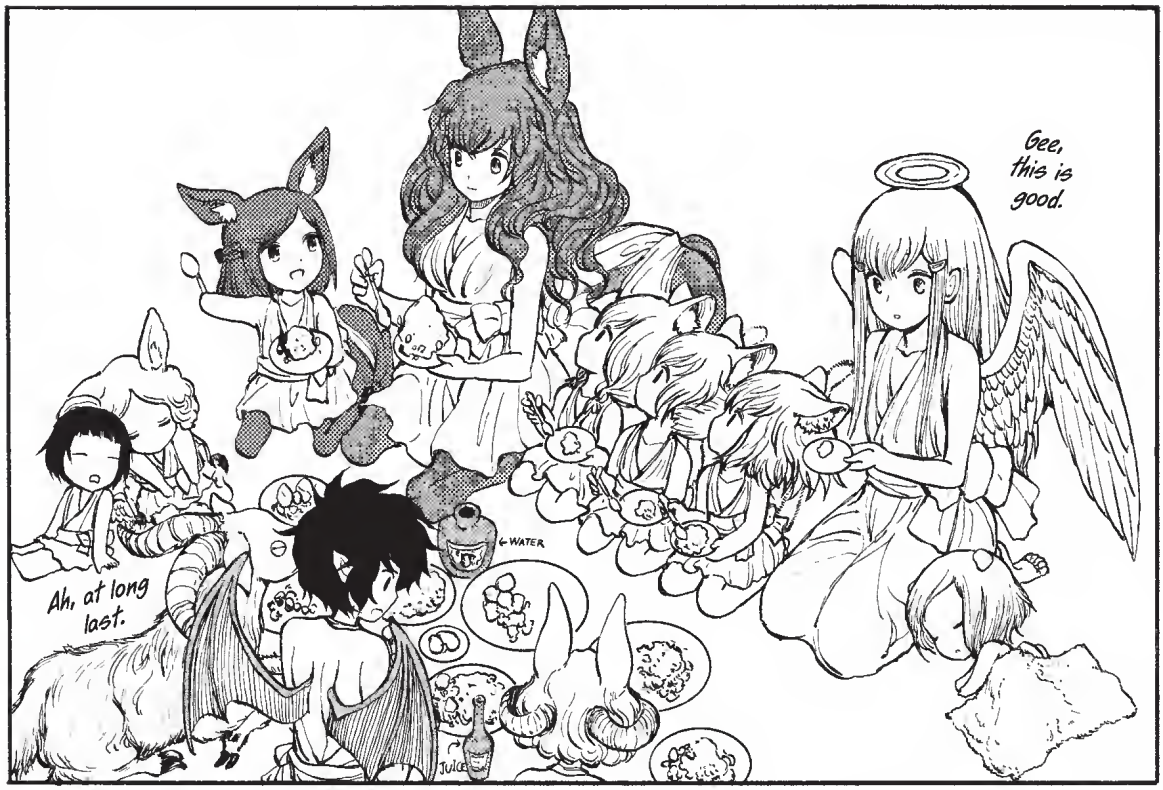

FOOT-SIES!
EEK!

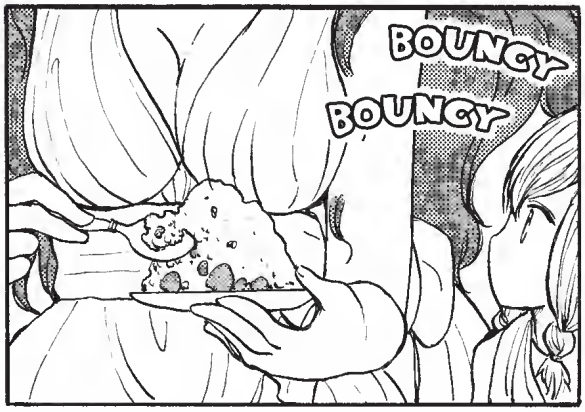

MAKI-CHAN, YOU CAN DO FOOTSIES WITH ME.

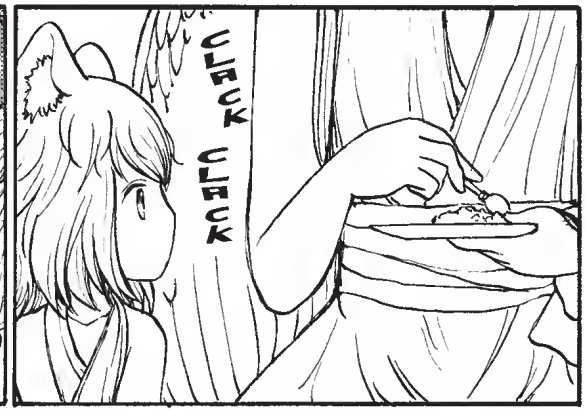
BARK!
ICHIRO!
Bye-bye, teacher!
Oh!
Things must be very hectic with the move.
Work finally moved us to housing that allows pets, so we were able to get our dog back.
SHINO, HER DOG'S ALIVE.
FOOT-SIES!

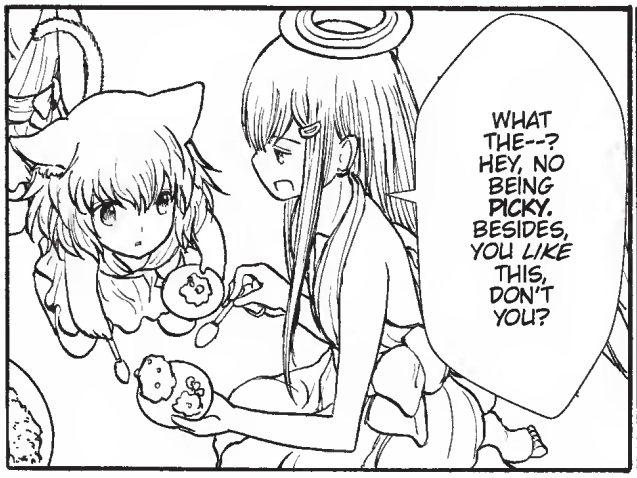
A CentaUr's Life

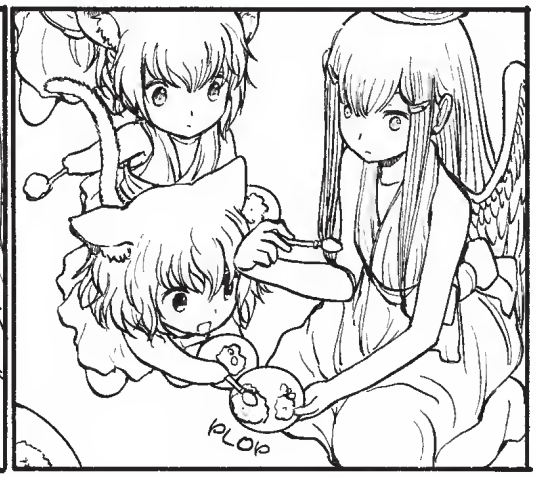
AFTERWORD...

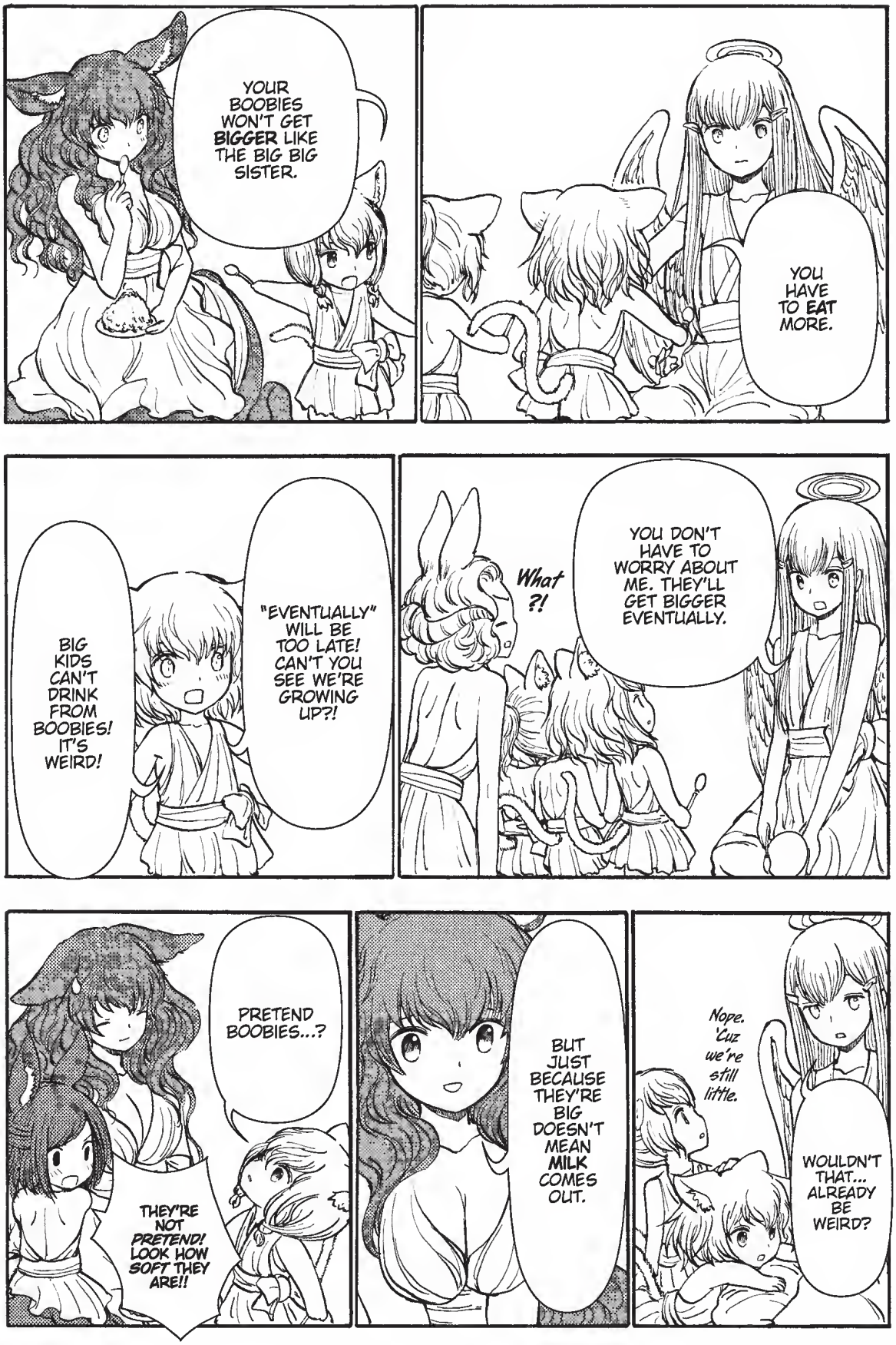

Gee, this is good.
Ah, at long last.
WATER
Julie


BOUNCY
BOUNCY


CLACK
CLACK

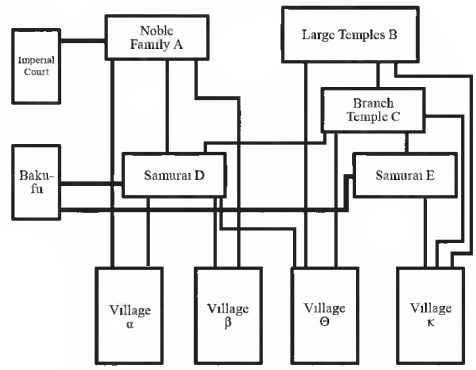

WHAT THE--? HEY, NO BEING PICKY. BESIDES, YOU LIKE THIS, DON'T YOU?


PLOP

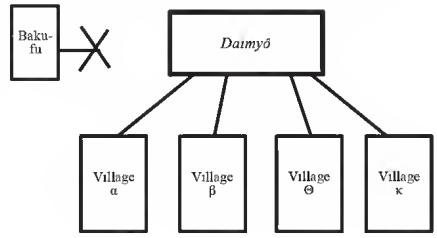

YOUR BOOBIES WON'T GET BIGGER LIKE THE BIG BIG SISTER.
YOU HAVE TO EAT MORE.
BIG KIDS CAN'T DRINK FROM BOOBIES! IT'S WEIRD!
"EVENTUALLY" WILL BE TOO LATE! CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE GROWING UP?!
What ?!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME. THEY'LL GET BIGGER EVENTUALLY.
PRETEND BOOBIES...?
THEY'RE NOT PRETEND! LOOK HOW SOFT THEY ARE!!
BUT JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE BIG DOESN'T MEAN MILK COMES OUT.
Nope. 'Cuz we're still little.
WOULDN'T THAT... ALREADY BE WEIRD?

THE RISING PHOENIX OF HIDACHI

Control of land prior to Muromachi period:



Control of land during Sengoku period:



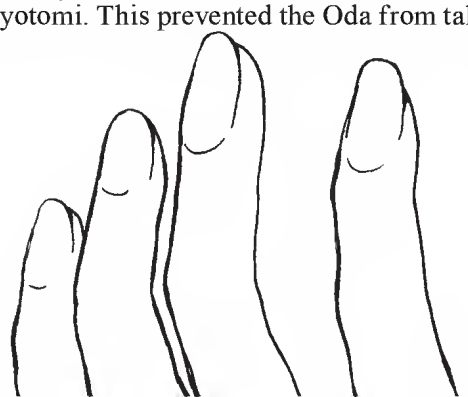
In the Warring States (Sengoku) period, the Yuki, Satake, Uesugi, and Hôjô forces surrounded the once-great Oda clan. The Oda clan had once ranked among the *Kantô Hachi-Yakata*, or eight governing families of the Kantô region, but its forces were now unable to do anything more than hold its position in southern Kantô. Though the Oda were able to push back the Yuki forces by allying with the Hôjô, this invited attacks from the Uesugi, who were vying with the Hôjô for control of Kantô, as well as from the Uesugi's allies, the Satake. In the first month of the year 1564 (Eiroku 7), the Oda clan headquarters of Oda Castle (in the modern-day city of Kanata) was captured by Uesugi Kenshin**, and Oda Ujiharu fled to Tsuchiura Castle (in modern-day Tsuchiura). Tsuchiura Castle, too, would be captured in the fourth month of that same year, only for the Oda Castle to be reclaimed by Ujiharu in the twelfth month of the following year. The Oda Castle would be lost once again in the second month of the following year after yet another assault by the Satake and Uesugi clans, and Ujiharu would once again flee to Tsuchiura. Historical records indicate that survivors captured during this time were sold off as slaves for twenty to thirty *zeni*.*Sengoku daimyô* were as empires in and of themselves, and they could become extremely rich and powerful by conquering and plundering other lands. On the other hand, those who failed to do so would starve to death or be forced to live alongside one another in poverty.

In 1568, Oda Ujiharu would declare surrender to Uesugi Kenshin, thereby allowing the reclamation of Oda Castle... albeit with strings attached. The Satake forces continued to close in, however, and although Ujiharu did succeed in defending the central headquarters of Oda Castle, Yatabe Castle was lost. Yatabe Castle stood in the same location of what is now known as Yakata City, meaning that the Satake forces now had now secured ground uncomfortably close to Oda headquarters.

On the first day of the year 1573, with the Oda Castle's guard lowered for the new year's *renga* festival, the Satake launched another assault, and Ujiharu fled yet again to Tsuchiura. Though Oda Castle was quickly reclaimed this time, Ujiharu was defeated in the Battle of Tehaizaka later that year, and Oda Castle was again lost to the Satake. While the Oda had lost their central dominion, they nevertheless fought on tenaciously, enlisting the aid of the Hôjô, and so it was that Ujiharu would become known to future generations as the "Rising Phoenix of Hidachi."

However, in the year 1590 (Tensho 18), the Oda waged what was to be their final attempt to reclaim Oda Castle--the Battle of Hinoguchi. This ended in failure, and with the trusty Hôjô clan entrenched in battle with Toyotomi Hideyoshi, there was no hope of reclaiming Oda Castle.

In the end, the Oda clan became entrenched in conflict with the Satake, which had pledged fealty to Toyotomi. This prevented the Oda from taking part in the Battle of Odawara, and Toyotomi took control of all domains, wiping out a number of *daimyô* legacies.



And so it was that the Oda clan's homeland--that is, modern-day Kanata city--changed from a political center to a simple farming village, as it was to stay for many years to come.

***This Uesugi was not Yamauchi Uesugi, who held the post of Kantô Kanrei for many years, but rather Uesugi Kenshin, who was previously known as Nagao Kagetora until succeeding the family line.*

THE END OF MEDIEVAL JAPAN AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN ERA

What was the "medieval" era in Japan? Simply put, the term refers to the era in which there was no centralized political regime, as well as the self-sufficient, self-enforcing society of that era, which was divided amongst countless disparate domains. Private manors or plots of land known as *shôen* were owned by powerful court nobles, regents, and large temples. However, the *shôen* were not all managed directly, but rather entrusted to the care of lower-level noble families, temples, and shrines, who in turn had samurai to act as actual on-site stewards of the land. They in turn had local magistrates, and soon. It was in this way that operation of the *shôen* was managed by way of sub-contract, sub-sub-contract, and even sub-sub-sub-contract, each level of the hierarchy receiving a corresponding share of the land. Samurai quarreled with one another over territory*, and the Kamikura Bakufu was formed to serve as an interest-regulating entity. Initially, the Bakufu only exercised control over a lower-ranking class of vassals known as *gokenin.* Meanwhile, the would-be central governing force that was the Imperial court no longer saw direct control over the land nor provided its financial or executive backing. Government functions were instead segmented across multiple clans.

There was no way to uphold a system of law and order under these circumstances, meaning the protection of oneself and one's rights came down to the strength and ability of the individual. Villages began establishing their own laws and operating as self-governing entities known as *sôson,* which would in turn either unite or clash with other *sôson,* looking to formidable bands of samurai for protection. Various allegiances formed and peppered the land, with skirmishes between *sôson* turning into all-out wars between samurai. This was medieval Japan.

However, the downfall of the Muromachi Bakufu, which was itself comprised of powerful *daimyô,* brought about the beginning of the Warring States *(Sengoku)* period. Territorial control, which had become highly fragmented, was once again unified under *daimyô* authority. Neither the conflict-resolving executive authorities, known as shugo, nor the Bakufu could interfere with *daimyô. Sôson* and samurai, once a major source of unrest, were forbidden from taking part in personal conflicts, and were in turn given the right to present the *daimyô* with proper lawsuits. Unified law was established, and the *daimyô* gained both judicial and executive privileges. Indeed, the *daimyô* had established a modern nation with one centralized government. It was the beginning of the modern age.

**Granted, this was only in the beginning. Starting with the late Kamikura period, land ownership became increasingly unified (a trend known as honjo ichienchika). Unification of ownership meant the loss of ownership for some, of course, and it was specifically the noble families who once claimed ownership over shôen that now had to yield to the samurai who directly oversaw those lands.*

SEVEN SEAS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

A Centaur's Life

story and art by KEI MURAYAMA

VOLUME 7

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CENTAUR NO NAYAMI VOLUME 7
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ISBN: 978-1-626922-09-9

Printed in Canada

First Printing: November 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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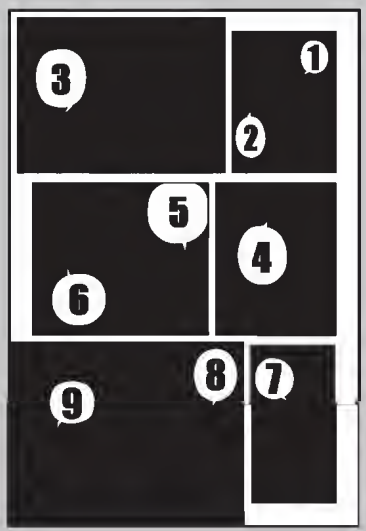
READING DIRECTIONS

This book reads from ***right to left***, Japanese style. If this is your first time reading manga, you start reading from the top right panel on each page and take it from there. If you get lost, just follow the numbered diagram here. It may seem backwards at first, but you'll get the hang of it! Have fun!!



Centaur girl Hime and her adorable cousin Shino, along with their catfolk, angelfolk, and other friends, pose the following question: are the legendary weretigers truly extinct? In the meantime, a battle of the home-makers ensues, while some serious father-daughter time is in order. Plus: mysterious space aliens have arrived!

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

OLDER TEEN (16+)

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